THE DIFFERENCE OF THE CASE,

Between the Separation of Proteſtants from the

Church of Rome,

And the Separation of Diſſenters from the

Church of England,

LONDON:
Printed by *F. Collins*, for *Thomas Baſſet* at the *George* in *Fleetſtreet*. 1686.

The Difference of the Caſe, between the Separation of Proteſtants from the Church of Rome, *and the Separation of Diſſenters from the Church of* England.

SInce the happy *Reformation* of this Church, they of the *Romiſh* Perſwaſion have with their utmoſt Art inſinuated, that our Reformation proceeded upon Principles Deſtructive of all *Order and Government* in the Church; and that it naturally tends to *endleſs Separations*. To this end they have laid hold upon that advantage which the Diviſions amongſt *Proteſtants* have offered them, and ſaid, that the Reaſons upon which we ground *our Separation* from the *Church* of *Rome*, will hold to juſtifie the *Separation* of the *Diſſenters* from the *Church* of *England*. And the Truth is, ſome of the Diſſenters have been ſo Indiſcreet, to ſay no more, as to alledge the ſame thing. And I am very ſorry that Men of the ſame Perſwaſion with us, in Oppoſition to the Impious Errors and Practices of the *Roman* Church, ſhould give ſo much Countenance to that grievous Charge upon the Reformation, as ſome of them have done. The *Papiſts* are too much beholden to them for giving the Occaſion of this Accuſation: but to joyn with them in the ſame Charge, is too great a kindneſs in all Reaſon, and indeed Deſtructive of the Common Cauſe of the *Reformation*, by inſinuating one of theſe two things, either that there was no Reaſon for this *Separation* on either part; or elſe that notwithſtanding our pretended Reformation, we are ſtill as bad as the Church of *Rome*: for otherwiſe they cannot have the ſame Reaſon to ſeparate from us, that we had at firſt to ſeparate from that Church.

I shall endeavour with Gods help to shew in a short and plain Discourse upon this subject, that the Cases are vastly different; and that we have very good Reasons wherewith to justifie our Separation from the Church of *Rome*; and that the Dissenters who forsake our Communion, cannot by any good consequence from those Reasons, warrant their Separation from our Church.

In this attempt, I am sensible that I have Adversaries on both sides; and that it often happens to be a nice and hazardous business to determine between two Extremes. But I hope there is no reason to apprehend great Danger in this Case; since it is the same false Charge against the Reformation, in which these Extreme Parties agree; and it is of that nature, that 'tis all one whether I confute it against the *Papists*, or against the *Protestant Separatists*; for if it be disproved against one, 'tis shewn to be unjust in both.

This is our Case, that as we charge those of the Separation from our Church with *Schism*, so do the *Romanists* charge us of the Church of *England* with *Schism* too: But with this Difference, as we pretend, that we have good Reason for that, so have not they for this. For *Schism* is a *Causeless Separation from a Church*. And we think we may appeal to all Disinterested and Judicious *Christians*, that we have shewn our Separation from *Rome* to be grounded upon Just and Necessary Causes; but that the Dissenters have shewn none such for their Separation from us. And when all is done, it should not incline any man to think that the Truth is either with the *Romanist*, or with the *Dissenter*, because the charge of *Schism* is laid by the *Romanist* against us, and by us against the *Separatist* with equal confidence, unless he sees withal that it is laid with equal Justice.

For it was not indeed to be expected, but that when some

ſome *Proteſtants* demanding a farther Reformation, ſeparated from our Church, this pretence would ſoon after be ſet on foot both by thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, and by thoſe of the Separation. It lay fair for them both, and right or wrong, was likely to be taken up by both; ſince it would ſerve exceedingly well to help a bad Cauſe, and to give popular colours to the weak Arguments, both of the one and of the other ſide. The *Romaniſt* was not likely to forego ſuch an advantage as the Separation of our Diſſenters gave him, to diſgrace the Reformation amongſt thoſe that loved Unity. Nor was the *Separatiſt* likely to omit that advantage which our Reformation gave him, to commend his Separation from us, under the notion of a farther Separation from *Rome*, to thoſe that abhorred *Popery*. And therefore it will ſtand all diſcreet Perſons in hand to weigh the merits of the Cauſe on both ſides, and not to admit any prejudice againſt our Communion in favour either of the *Papiſt* or the *Sectary*, meerly becauſe they both ſay, that in juſtifying our Separation from the *Papiſt*, we vindicate the Separation of the *Sectary* from our ſelves.

I muſt not in this narrow compaſs pretend to enter upon a Diſcuſſion of the ſeveral Queſtions controverted between us and our Adverſaries on both ſides; but ſhall take it for granted, that what has been ſaid in Anſwer to the ſeveral Objections of the *Diſſenters* againſt our Communion has been well argued againſt *them*: And likewiſe that in charging the Church of *Rome* with thoſe ſeveral Corruptions in Doctrine and Practice, which have made her Communion Intolerable, we have ſaid upon each point no more than what has been well proved againſt *that Church*; and which upon all fit Occaſions, we ſhall, by the Grace of God, be ready to make good again. But my principal deſign is to ſhew, that there is no manner of Inconſiſtence in the way

way we take to vindicate our selves from *Schism* charged upon us by the Church of *Rome*, with those principles upon which we accuse our Dissenting Brethren of that fault, who separate from the Church of *England*: And that the *Romanist* cannot take our Arguments against the Separation of the Dissenters, to condemn our Reformation; nor the Separatist our Reasons against the Communion of the *Romanist*, to acquit himself in forsaking the Communion of our Church.

This I conceive will be made to appear, 1. By laying down the Reasons on both sides; those by which we pretend to justifie our Separation from the Church of *Rome*; and those upon which the Dissenters lay the stress of their Separation from us.

2. By comparing them together, that we may judge wherein and how far these Cases agree with, or differ from one another.

In laying down the Reasons on both sides, I shall begin with the grounds upon which this Church separated from the Church of *Rome*; and then proceed to those upon which the Dissenters separate from us.

1. To the Church of *Rome* charging us with Schism, we Answer in general: That our Separation from her was necessary, by reason of those Corruptions in her Communion, which we could not comply with against the Conviction of our Consciences. More particularly we say, That this Church of *England* had no dependance upon the Authority of the Church of *Rome*, which She might not lawfully throw off, and that She does not owe any Subjection to the Bishop of *Rome*, but had just Power, without asking his leave, or staying for his Consent, to Reform Her self. And withal, that the Church of *Rome* ought to have Reformed Her self, as we have done, since there were most necessary Causes for so doing; the Communion of that Church being defiled with the profession of those damnable Errors, and the

the practice of those Superstitions and Idolatries which we have done away. To this purpose we challenge those of that Communion with the particulars of their *Doctrine of Transubstantiation*, their *Sacrifice of the Mass*, their *Service in an unknown Tongue*, their *half Communion*, their *Worship of Images*, their *Adoration of the Host*, and the rest of those Abominations, whereof the Communion of that Church doth in great part consist. We acknowledge, that we separated from them in these things, when we Reformed our selves; but in so doing we were not guilty of *Schism* from the Church of *Rome*, and that if nothing else were to be said, because this Church owes no Subjection to that: but withal that the Causes of the Reformation being so necessary as we pretend them to be, the Separation of Communion that ensued upon our being, and their hating to be Reformed, was on our side just and necessary upon that account also, and therefore not *Schismatical*.

So that our Answer is twofold.

1. That the Church of *England* being by no kind of Right, subject to the *Roman*, or any Forreign Bishop, *had full Power and Authority, without asking leave of Forreigners to Reform her self*. And this we say would have cleared her from the Imputation of *Schism*, if the causes of the Reformation had not been so necessary as indeed they were. If before the Reformation there had been no Unlawful Conditions of Communion required in the *Western* Churches, and all the fault that could have been found in them, had amounted to no more than bare Inconveniencies and Imprudence in the manner of their Discipline, or in ordering the outward Mode of Worship; it had yet been free for the Church of *England* to have Reformed those lesser faults within her self, though no other Church would have done the like. And though for such defects remaining in other Churches *abroad*, she *ought not* to have *Separated* from their Communion; yet

yet she *might* very justly and commendably *free her self* from them *at home*. But if a *Forreign* Church suppose that of *Rome*, should hereupon have abstained from the Communion of this Church, till we had returned to the former *Inconvenient*, though *Lawful* Rites and Customs, that *Forreign* Church had been guilty of Schism in so doing. And if the Church of *England*, not willing to part with her *Liberty*, and to prostitute her *Authority* to the Usurpation of the See of *Rome*, should have adher'd to her own Reformation, she had not been guilty of the breach of Communion, following that her Resolution; because she had done nothing, but what was within the compass of her just Power to do, and in which she was not liable to be controuled by any other Church.

Ad Antonianum, Ep. 52.

We say, with St. *Cyprian*, that *the Episcopal Government of the Church ought to be but one, spread abroad amongst Bishops, many in number, but heartily agreeing together*. But with the same excellent Man we say too, that *it is Equal that every one of them should have a part of the Flock assigned to him, which he is to govern, remembring that he is to give an account of his management to God*. Which he said, in asserting the Freedom of the *African* Churches from Subjection to the *Roman*. This we think is justly applicable to our Case.

Ad Cornelium, Ep. 55.

The Church of *England* is a *National Church*, once indeed under the Usurpation of the *Roman* Bishop, and at length rescued from that servitude; we are at present United together by common Rules for Government and Worship, consulted upon and agreed unto by the Bishops and Presbyters in Convocation, and then made Laws to all the particular Churches of this Kingdom, by the Authority of the Soveraign. These Laws shew the Reformation of the Church; And they do not want any Authority they ought to have, for wanting the consent of the *Roman* Bishop, upon whom we have neither *Ecclesiastical* nor *Civil* Dependence. For if any one

one single Bishop of the *African* Church might determine Causes, and judge matters of Ecclesiastical cognizance, (which yet was seldom done in things of moment without the advice of Collegues when the Church had rest from Persecution) and this without allowing Appeals to *Rome*; much more may the Bishops of a whole Christian Kingdom confederate together to order Church-matters Independently upon the See of *Rome*, especially being required thereunto by their Christian Soveraign to whom they all owe Subjection and Obedience in all things, saving their common Christianity. So that if the Causes of the Reformation had not been so weighty as indeed they were, yet considering the Authority by which it was effected, our Separation from *Rome* thereupon ensuing was wholly guiltless on our part, it being necessary, unless we would submit to the Unjust and Tyrannous Claims of a Forreign Bishop.

2. To the charge of *Schism* laid against us by the *Romanist*, we answer also, that *the Conditions of Communion required in the* Roman *Church, were many of them unlawful to be submitted unto*; since we could not communicate with her without professing Doctrines that are plainly contrary to Gods Word, nor without doing several things that are clearly and particularly forbidden by it. And since it is not in the Power of any Man or Church, to dispense with our Obligations to the Laws of God, we could not be obliged to preserve Communion with the Bishop of *Rome* and his Adherents, upon those Terms. But because Catholick Communion ought to be preserved, they ought to have put away those Scandals from amongst themselves, which since they have not done, though the *Separation* is equal on both sides, yet the *Schism* is not ours, but theirs only.

And therefore we farther say, that if the Corruptions

of the *Roman* Church (which God forbid) ſhould ever come to be eſtabliſh'd in this Church of *England* again by the ſame Authority that has aboliſh'd them; it were not onely lawful, but a neceſſary Duty to ſeparate from the Communion of this Church in that caſe. We have that Reverence of Church-Authority, and of the Supreme Magiſtrate, that we will ſubmit to their Determinations in all things wherein God has left us to our own liberty. But if they command us to do things contrary to his Determination, and to take that liberty which he has not given us, we muſt remember that we are to obey God rather than Man. We have that ſenſe alſo of the miſchief of Diviſions and Separations, and of the Duty of maintaining Church-Communion, that if the Laws of God be but obſerved, we are not onely ready to comply with what our own Superiours impoſe upon us, for the ſake of Peace and Unity at home; but if we were to go abroad, we ſhould obſerve the Cuſtoms of other Churches, though perhaps very different from ours, and this for the ſake of maintaining one Communion of Chriſtians every where. But neither abroad, nor at home, can we purchaſe Unity of Communion at ſo dear a rate as to break Gods Commandments for it.

We know it is a good thing for all the parts of the Church to have but one Communion, but we *muſt not do evil, that* even this *good may come*. And leaſt of all that evil which Church-Communion, and Church-Authority were in great part deſigned to prevent. For as we believe that Chriſt formed his Diſciples into a Spiritual Society, ſo we have great reaſon to conclude that one main end hereof was, that by the Communion of Chriſtians under their Governours, the holy Truths and Laws of God concerning his Worſhip and our Salvation, might be more advantageouſly held forth to the World, and more effectually guarded and maintained.

tained. And therefore to keep this Communion *one* as much as in us lies, we will do any thing required by our Superiours, that God has left us free to do or not: But to deny that Holy Truth or any part of it, or to break any of those Divine Laws, for the sake of which this Communion it self was instituted, neither of these things dare we do to prevent Divisions and Separations. And we are as sure that *Transubstantiation*, *Adoration of the Host*, *Worshipping of Images*, *Praying to the Dead*, and *Praying in an unknown Tongue*, are Repugnant to several express Texts of Scripture, not to say to common Sense and Reason: We are, I say, as sure that they are the plain Laws and Truths of God to which these things are contrary; and withal, that to guard these Truths God Instituted *a Church*, and *a Communion of Saints*, as we are that there was any such thing as a Church Instituted, or Church-Communion required. And truly if Separation, when there is such cause for it as we pretend, were not a necessary Duty, it might become the Duty of *Christians* to be United in Scandalous Impieties and Damnable Errours. And I think no body will say, that in such things one Communion is either to be desired or excused, but rather to be broken, and that every Man is concerned as much as his Salvation is worth to break away from it. And we are certain it can never be necessary to any Mans Salvation to be a *Schismatick*.

Upon this account, we say, that they who in Queen *Mary*'s days chose to lay down their lives, rather than return to the Communion of the *Roman* Church, were so far from being *Schismaticks*, that they were Gods Martyrs in so doing. And had it been, or should it be our Lot to have this choice so hard to Flesh and Bloud offered to us; we trust, that through the mighty Grace of God, we should follow the Faith and Patience of those holy Men and Women, who sealed this Cause

with their Bloud, meekly ſuffering under the Diſpleaſure of that Juſt Authority, the Unjuſt Commands whereof they could not honeſtly obey. This plain, though general account, we give of the Separation of the Church of *England* from the Church of *Rome*. And if we pretend no more in our own Defence againſt that Church, than we can prove, we have reaſon to think our ſelves ſafe on that ſide.

2. Let us now ſee upon what Principles and by what Pleas the Diſſenters defend their Separation from the Church of *England*. To us therefore charging them with *Schiſm* upon this account, they anſwer alſo, That our Communion is *Corrupt*, and that they cannot with a *ſafe Conſcience* continue in it; and that they are bound for *greater Purity* of Worſhip and Ordinances, to divide from us. But in making out this general Anſwer they do not all go the ſame way, nor do ſome of them allow thoſe to be good Reaſons for a Separation, which others think ſubſtantial enough. That in which moſt of them do agree, is in aſſigning ſome *Ceremonies* injoyned in our Church, concerning which, ſome of them ſay that they are unlawful to be uſed in Gods Worſhip; others of them, that there is great cauſe to doubt whether they be lawful or not: And theſe dare not joyn in our Communion with ſcrupulous and unſatisfied minds. The things of this ſort are the *Signe of the Croſs in the office of Baptiſm*, (though this be made by the Miniſter onely) *Kneeling in the act of receiving the Euchariſt*, and *the Miniſters wearing the Surplice in Publick Worſhip*. The other Faults they find with the Liturgy, however they are thought by the Generality of Diſſenters to be a Reaſon ſufficient to ground Separation upon, are not I think produced by thoſe that ſhould beſt underſtand the Cauſe, as amounting to make our Communion directly Unlawful. But yet there are that ſay, they *ought not to prefer a worſe Mode of ſerving God*

God before a better: And the Mode which themselves observe, being better, they are to prefer that before ours, and therefore to separate from us for the most part. Others go yet further from us, and take Liturgies, and prescribed Forms of Prayer to be unlawful to be used, or at least suspect them so to be. And all these do generally dislike the Form of *Diocesan* Episcopacy: However, they seem not to lay the stress of their Separation upon that, since they acknowledge our Churches to be true Churches of *Christ*, and if it were not for other things, might be lawfully Communicated with, although they are governed by Bishops. And because the Civil Authority concurs with the Ecclesiastical in requiring Conformity to our Church-Laws, they do not pretend those Laws to be enforced by an Authority to which they are not bound to submit. And therefore as far as I can find, they rather chuse to justifie their Separation upon the account of the unlawfulness or suspected unlawfulness of the things imposed, or upon the preference of a better Communion than ours is. But out of these I must except the *Independents* who acknowledge no other Church to be agreeable to the Word of God, but such a company of Christian People United one to another by a particular Covenant under Officers of their own chusing, as can at once assemble in the same place for the Worship of God. And these men think the very Constitution of our Church to be reason enough for a Separation from it. I will take notice of no other Dissenters at present, but those that separate upon some one or more of these grounds; which may be reduced to three.

1. That a National Church-Authority, is an Usurpation upon particular Congregations, which are pretended to be the onely Churches of Christs Institution, and that every such Church has full Power in it self to order all things relating to Worship and Discipline, and

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is not of right accountable to any other Authority for the order it shall take to govern it self in these things; And therefore the *Independents*, as I said, think themselves clear of the Guilt of *Schism*, as having separated from a Church which is not of *Christs* Institution. For they take an Independent Congregation onely, to be such. But yet these are willing to come in with the other Dissenters for their Interest in the next ground of Separation, upon which all of them, as far as I can judge, hope to find the surest footing; and that is,

2. That the conditions of our Communion, those namely before-mentioned, are not lawful for a Christian to submit unto. And here I include those that do but scruple the lawfulness of those things which are injoyned in our Church. For they that say positively they are unlawful, and they that but suspect them to be unlawful, produce the same Arguments; the former to justifie their *Peremptorineß*, the latter their *Scruples*. The Reasons, I say, upon which they go, are the same, onely they work up some of them to a greater height of confidence than others are come to; and some again they leave altogether doubtful what to say, whether to conclude for us or against us. They agree in blaming our Church for requiring things to be done in Gods Worship which he has not commanded, some also of which have been and still are done by *Papists* in their *Idolatrous* Services, from whom we ought to depart in all things that are not necessary to be done. Upon these grounds some pretend to be *sure*, others to be *afraid* that to suffer their Children *to be signed with the sign of the Cross*, to *Kneel at the Communion*, to *be present at Divine Service where a Surplice is worn*, and to submit to *Liturgies and prescribed Forms of Worship*, are unlawful. And these Reasons I find owned in the *Case of Indifferent Things used in Gods Worship, stated on the behalf of Dissenters*, just now published.

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For thus that Author declares in their behalf: *We cannot*, saith he, *conceive it possible, that in things of Divine Worship, things of an indifferent nature should be the just matter of any Humane Determination, farther than the particular Practice of the Person determining.* And again, *Where in matters of Worship God hath wrote Ors, whether by his Pen in Sacred Writing, or by his not prescribing the particular Circumstances, no Man can blot them out; though themselves may as to their own Practice, for this or that Time or Act, where they cannot use more than one of those Postures or Circumstances.* That is, where God hath left men at their liberty to do this, *Or* that, they may Determine themselves. but no Humane Authority may Determine for them. Farther, *As to things in Gods Worship not determined by God, they judge every man is* Sui Juris, *and ought to be determined by God alone to this, Or that; i.e.* he can be obliged to this or that part by God onely. And he says plainly, that *most* of them *are confident that in matters of Worship no Superiours may restrain what God hath left at liberty. In pursuance* of this general Principle, he says, some Posture in an *Humane Action being necessary, and none by God determined in every Act of Worship, where there is no Determination, they believe themselves at liberty, and think they ought not to be determined by any thing but their own practical Judgment, according to present Circumstances: It is a Liberty with which God hath made them free.* Again, He acknowledges that they *judge* it *unlawful* to obey Laws concerning *Words in Prayer which God hath left at liberty*, and concerning *Habits and Gestures, supposing them to be left at liberty, and that none who is to use them, verily judgeth them unlawful.* And he intimates more than once, that *things not necessary, and ordinarily used in Idolatrous and Superstitious Services, may not*, in their Judgment, *be lawfully used.* How well he has proved these Positions, I am not concerned to examine; but leave him for that to his

Case on behalf of Diss. p. 5. p. 17. p. 16, 17. p. 9. p. 20, &c.

his Learned *Antagonist.* These Observations are particular enough for my purpose, which is to shew the difference between the ground of our Separation from the *Roman* Church, and those of their Separation from us, whom this Gentleman defends.

3. There are those who, for all this, seem not to think our Communion unlawful in it self, since they can sometimes Communicate with us in our whole Service. But they judge the way of the Separate Meetings to be more perfect, and a better means of Edification; and the ground of their Separation is this, that it is unlawful to Communicate ordinarily in a more imperfect way of Worship, and enjoying the Ordinances of the Gospel, where a better may be had.

2. I come now to the second Point, which is to compare the grounds of Separation on both sides together; that we may judge wherein they differ, or how far they agree.

1. I do acknowledge that the most general ground of all, is the same on both sides, or at least may be so; that is, that we separate from the Church of *Rome*, in a *full Perswasion of Conscience*, that so we ought to do; And that the *Dissenters* separate from the Church of *England* with the like Perswasion. But how far this Agreement makes the Case of Separation the same on both sides; and whether it will equally justifie the Church of *England*'s separating from *Rome*, and the *Dissenters* separating from the Church of *England*, will be considered time enough after all the other Reasons are compared.

2. The next general Reason on both sides alledged is, that Separation was necessary for *greater Purity of Worship and Ordinances*. *We* for greater Purity separated from *Rome*: The *Dissenters* for greater Purity separated from us. Now whether this may or may not reasonably be pretended by the *Dissenters* in their Case,

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as well as by the Church of *England* in hers, will best appear when we have laid together the particulars excepted against on both sides, by us with Reference to the Communion of the Church of *Rome*; by the Dissenters, with Reference to the Communion of the Church of *England*; and have also considered the way of maintaining Objections against the Terms of Communion with *Rome* or *England*, that is peculiar to each side. But,

3. There is not the same Plea offered to justifie the Separation in both Cases, with respect to that *Authority* by which the Conditions of Communion are prescribed. For we of the Church of *England* do unanimously deny that the *Bishop* of *Rome* hath any just Authority to make Rules for the Communion, or to prescribe Laws for the Government of our Church. But all the Dissenters do not question the lawfulness of that Authority by which our *Liturgie* is Established, and those things which they Object against, are required. For those of the *Presbyterian* Perswasion amongst us, however they dislike *Diocesan* Episcopacy, yet seem not to insist upon it in their late Writings, as a ground of Separation from this Church; but if other things were Reformed according to their mind, they would submit to our Bishops, and by their Conformity contribute to uphold the Order of this *National Church*. But then the *Independents* indeed must in consequence of their Principles, deny that Bishops singly or joyntly, whether with the Civil Authority, or without it, have any right to prescribe to their Congregations in matters *Ecclesiastical*, since in these things they hold their Members to be accountable to no Authority under God, but that of the Congregation to which they belong.

And now I shall compare the two Cases of Separation with respect to three things which will, I conceive, comprehend all the forementioned Pleas on both sides;

that is with respect, 1. To Authority. 2. To *Terms of Communion*, and under this head to the common Pretence of *Separating for greater Purity*. 3. To the *Plea of Conscience*.

1. With respect to *Authority*. We are divided from the Church of *Rome* as one particular constituted Church from another, neither of which has any Authority to prescribe to the other in matters *Ecclesiastical*. And therefore, as I said before, though the Terms of the Communion of that Church were not unlawful, yet if She would have no Communion with us, unless we would be govern'd by Her Laws: And if our Church-Governours should use their own Liberty and Authority to prescribe to us what they judged more suitable to the General Rules of Scripture, and more conducible to the great ends of Christianity: The Separation ensuing upon that Churches affecting an Usurpation over us, could not be *Schismatical* on our part, who are not the Subjects of the Bishop of *Rome*; but upon the part of that Church it would be so for Her exercising an Authority, where She has no right so to do.

But the Case of the Dissenters is far otherwise, who separate from this National Church in which they were Born and Baptized, and where they live. For by thus doing, we say, that they withdraw their Obedience from their Lawful Governours; from whom if they Divide, especially if they set up a Communion distinct from that of their Superiours, and of the Congregations under them, they are guilty of manifest Schism, unless the Terms of Communion be unlawful. For it is by no means sufficient to clear them of this fault, that those things which fall within the compass of Church-Authority are not well order'd; because, although this were true, yet in these things their practice is to be determined by that Authority. For we think it very evident, that no Society can be united and maintained without this

this Principle, that a Lawful Authority is to be submitted unto and obeyed by Inferiors in all lawful things, and that the mere Imprudence or Inexpedience of its Determinations, cannot absolve them from their Obligation to comply therewith.

Now that it is a Lawful Authority upon which the Constitutions of a National Church stands, I think no Man can deny, that will grant a National Church it self to be but a Lawful Constitution. For there is the Concurrence both of Civil and Ecclesiastical Superiors to give them force. The *Bishops* and *Presbyters* first agreed upon the same Rule and Order for Church Government and Worship, which being afterward approved by the *Lords* and *Commons* in *Parliament*, was then made a Law by the *King*. So that if the Confederation of the particular Churches of this Kingdom to govern themselves and to serve God in Religious Assemblies, by the same *Rule*, and according to the same *Form*, can become the matter of a Law obliging all Christians amongst us to Conformity; here is no Authority wanting to induce such an Obligation.

And it is to be consider'd, that every one who separates from that *Parochial* Congregation where he lives, and betakes himself to an Opposite Communion, had been guilty of Schism in so doing, although the Churches of this Kingdom had not been United as they are into a National Form; but each *Bishop* with his *Presbyters* had made Rules for Religious Assemblies Independently upon the Rest. But now the fault of such Separation is heinously aggravated, as the Case stands, by these two Considerations.

1. That those Orders or Impositions, upon the account whereof he separates from the Parish where he lives, were made by the common Advice of the Pastors of *Christ's* Flock in this Kingdom; and that for a common Rule to them all: Which method was a most pro-

per means to unite their particular Churches more closely one to another, and to edifie and strengthen them by such Union. Therefore that Separation which would have been blameable of it self, is so much the worse as it tends to break so profitable an Union, and to expose the Authority of so many Church-Governours to contempt, as contributed towards it by their advice and consent.

2. That since the Rules thus agreed upon, are made Laws also by the Soveraign Power; such Schism is aggravated farther by Disobedience to the lawful Commands of the Civil Authority under which we live, and to which all particular Churches in this Kingdom do owe Obedience in all lawful things. And now I believe our *Presbyterian* Brethren will grant, that upon these accounts there is a vast difference between the Cases of Separation from the Church of *England* and from the Church of *Rome* in point of Authority.

But then I must confess, the *Independents* are likely enough to say, that these Impositions are as truly Usurpations upon particular Congregations, as if they had been enforced upon this Kingdom by a pretended Authority from *Rome*. And if there were no difference between saying and proving, we might here be at a considerable loss. However, this must be granted, that an *English Bishop* may have good Authority to govern his *Diocess*, and a *Presbyter* his *Parish* here in *England*; and yet it may be foolish and unjust in a *Forreign Bishop*, to claim any Authority over the one or the other. And I hope they will not deny that the King has good Authority here, though the Pope has none; nor that the Laws of the Land concerning Religion and Gods Worship, do bind the Consciences of the Kings Subjects something more, than if they had wanted the Authority of the Legislative Power at home, and came to us from abroad with nothing but the Seal of the Fisherman to recommend them; *i. e.* that in this latter case we might have refused them

as

as wanting Authority, but not so in the former; but that the matter of them being supposed to be lawful, they ought to be complied with. And whereas the Independents suppose the Independency of their Congregations to be of Divine Right, both in Opposition to Episcopal Superiority, and to National Church-Government, this we must leave to the merits of the cause between them and us. And I may as well take it for granted, that their pretended Right to Independency has been as clearly argued of Novelty and Weakness, as the Popes pretended Right to Supremacy has been; argued, I say, of *more Novelty*, and almost *as much Weakness*.

But to step a little out of the way of my present business; I may appeal to all understanding persons, who cannot judge of the *Learning* used on both sides; whether that Notion of *a Church* or *of Church-Communion* is likely to be true, which makes it impossible for the particular Churches of a *Christian* Kingdom to be united under the Soveraign Authority in the observation of the same Rules advised upon, and the same Laws made for the benefit of them all. In the mean time I conclude this head with saying, that though the *Pope* has no Authority in this Kingdom, yet it follows not that *every particular Congregation* must be *Independent*. And I challenge any Man to take any one Argument used by any of our Church, to prove the *Independency* of *our Church* upon the Bishop of *Rome*, and make it hold to prove the *Independency* of a *Congregation*, either upon a National or Episcopal Church, if he can. Wherefore supposing the *Decrees* of the Bishop of *Rome* to be of no good Authority amongst us; and *our own Laws*, in matters *Ecclesiastical*, to want no good Authority, the Conditions of Communion being otherwise lawful on both sides; then the Separation ensuing upon our refusal to submit to those *Decrees*, would not be *Schismatical* on our part; but the Separation of our *Independents*, and all others amongst

amongst us refusing to submit to these Laws, would be so on their part. And thus much for the Difference in point of *Authority*.

2. We are to compare the Cases also with respect to the *Terms of Communion* relating to matters of *Faith* and *Worship*.

And in the first place, the *Dissenters* acknowledge that the Faith professed in this Church, is pure and intire, and that she does not require the profession of any Doctrine in order to her Communion, which a good *Christian* has reason to suspect. And this makes a great difference between the Terms of Communion with *our* Church, and the Terms thereof with the Church of *Rome*, which requires the profession of Gross and Palpable Errors, of all whom she admits to her Communion.

But the great Offence is taken at our *Forms* of *Divine Service*, and the *Ceremonies* thereunto belonging. And the offended Parties are of three sorts.

1. Those that do not directly charge any of our Practices in Worship as sinful, but suppose some of them to be *Inexpedient* and *Unedifying*: And they that separate upon this account, must acknowledge this Difference in the Case, that whereas we separating from *Rome* forsook an Unlawful Communion for one that was Lawful; they separating from us, forsake a Lawful Communion for one that they believe to be better. And of these I shall take notice again in a fitter place.

2. Another sort are they who pretend something more, that is, that they *scruple* the lawfulness of the things enjoyned, and that they ought not to communicate with us, so long as they remain under these doubts. And these Men also must confess a great difference between the reason upon which they separate from us, and that for which we separate from the Church of *Rome*; since we are *past doubting* in the case, and *positively* affirm those Conditions of Communion with the Church

of

of *Rome*, which we complain of, to be in themselves unlawful. And in consequence hereof, they must not deny that there is a great difference also between those *grounds* upon which they and we pretend against *that Church* the unlawfulness of her Impositions, and those upon which they *suspect* the like of *ours*; and that is, that the *Roman Church* is by us attacqued with *clear* and *unquestionable* Evidence of *Reason* and *Scripture* against her; but that it remains doubtful whether there be any good Evidence in Scripture against us: concerning which, more will be said under the next head. In the mean time it does by no means follow, that because Separation is *Just* and *Necessary*, where some things are required to be done which we *certainly know* God has forbidden; therefore it is *Just* and *Necessary* also where other things are required, concerning which, we do not know but they may be lawful.

3. The third sort are they that pretend these *Forms* of *Worship* and *Ceremonies*, which the former either *scruple*, or judge onely *Inexpedient*, to be indeed *sinful*, and to render our Communion not onely *suspected*, and *less desirable*, but *plainly unlawful*. And I grant, that these are the Men who come up to the point; and if they could but make good what they say, they would shew their Separation from our Church to be grounded upon one General Reason of our Separation from the Church of *Rome*, which would sufficiently clear us from the Imputation of *Schism*, if no other reason were to be given. But I believe a very wide Difference of the Case will appear, when we come to consider,

1. The *particular Practices themselves*, which are by us said to be unlawful in the Communion of the *Roman* Church; and those which by the *Dissenters* are said to be unlawful in *ours*. And,

2. *The way and means* by which we pretend to *prove those*, and *that* by which they pretend to *prove these* unlawful.

1. Let

1. Let us consider the particulars themselves. The *Dissenters* do with us condemn, as unlawful, *Prayers in an unknown Tongue*; the *Adoration of the Host*; *Worshipping the Cross*; and the like Practices of the *Roman* Church in her Forms of Worship: from which they acknowledge also, that we have Purged our Communion. But they say we have retained other Practices something akin to these, though not quite so bad: for instance, *Kneeling at the Communion*; *wearing the Surplice*; *Signing with the Sign of the Cross*; and some of them adde, *the Publick use of Forms of Prayer*. Now all that I designe under this head, in comparing the former and the latter particulars together, is to shew, that the unlawfulness of the former being supposed, the unlawfulness of the latter cannot be from thence inferr'd; and that for this plain Reason, because the Questions concerning the one and the other, are perfectly distinct from one another. For as the Bishop of *Rome*'s having no Authority here in *England*, shall not hinder the Authority which our Bishops exercise in *England* from being Lawful and Good; so to pray in an *unknown Tongue*, may be absurd and contrary to Scripture: but for all this, *Forms of Prayer* in a Language understood by the whole Congregation, may not onely be Lawful but Profitable, and in most cases Necessary. The Adoration of the *Host* may be an *Idolatrous* Practice; yet to Kneel in the Act of receiving the *Eucharist*, where such Adoration is disclaimed, shall be no such Practice. We may *Sign* the Baptized Infant with the Signe of the Cross, and yet not *Worship* that Signe; we may do the former in token of the *Obligation* which *Baptism* layeth upon us, without attributing any of that Virtue or Efficacy thereunto, which makes the *Popish* use of it Foolish and Superstitious. What Practice is there in the *Roman* Church which we as unlawful have abandoned, from whence the unlawfulness of *Wearing a Surplice*, or *seeing* it worn, can with any colour of Reason

son be drawn? In a word, what *Erroneous Doctrine* in the Church of *Rome*, or unlawful Practice confess'd by the Dissenters to be by us rejected, can be assign'd, from which the unlawfulness of any of those things excepted against in our *Liturgie* can be inferr'd? Let them take any one Argument used by us to prove such or such a particular Condition of Communion unlawful which that Church requires, and by that Argument prove some Condition unlawful in ours, if they can. But perhaps they will say, That if they can prove this by other Arguments, the case in general will still be the same. This I confess, and therefore I proceed to the second Point, which was,

2. To shew the *Difference* between the *way and means by us used to prove* those Conditions of the *Roman* Communion *unlawful*, which we except against; and the *manner of arguing* used by the *Dissenters* against us. Now our way is plain and direct: for we prove those particulars in the *Roman* Worship unlawful which we condemn, by this Argument, that they are forbidden in Gods Word, and this we prove by those express and particular places of *Holy Scripture* to which they are repugnant. And if we fail not of producing such Testimonies against the Corruptions of that Church, we have the Advantage against the *Papists*. And if the *Dissenters* charge *any Condition* of our Communion with Repugnancy to Gods Law, and can as clearly shew where he hath forbidden it, they have the like Advantage against us.

Now indeed they say that the things imposed upon them, however we esteem them but *indifferent*, are by themselves judged unlawful. Thus the forementioned Author saith, *Could* they [*Dissenters*] *but look upon the* Forms and Rites of our Worship *under that Notion* [of things indifferent] *possibly their Contest would neither be great nor long.* I do not like these words, for

Case on behalf of Diss. p. 2.

that which may be, may not be; and *poſſibly the Conteſt would be great and long*, though they ſhould *look upon* theſe things as *Indifferent*. However, he ſays, that *we*
P 3. *ſuppoſe thoſe things indifferent which* they *cannot but judge unlawful, as they have often told their Brethren.* But how do they prove them unlawful? Do they ſhew where God hath forbidden them? As we, for inſtance, produce the *ſecond Commandment* to ſhew that in that Commandment God hath forbidden the *Worſhip of Images*, ſo do they; or can they produce any ſuch Teſtimony of Scripture againſt *Kneeling* when we receive the *Euchariſt*? And as we alledge, 1 *Cor.* 14. againſt praying in an *unknown Tongue*; can they ſhew us any Text in all the Bible againſt praying by a *Form of Words*? No, this is not what they pretend to do. But then we are apt to conclude, that if theſe things be not forbidden, that they are at leaſt *indifferent*, and therefore lawful. And which is ſomething more, we have their leave alſo thus to con-
P. 3. clude, ſeeing *there is none of them but agreeth with us in our Notion of Indifferent things*, viz. *that they are ſuch things as by the Divine Law are neither enjoyned nor forbidden: Things undetermined by the Law of God in Nature or Scripture.* How then do they prove thoſe things unlawful to be done in Gods Worſhip, which God hath not forbidden either in the Law of Nature or Scripture? To make ſhort work of it: Thoſe particulars in our Communion which they except againſt, are unlawful, becauſe they are not neceſſary to Worſhip, nor commanded by any expreſs Law of God. Which is as much as to ſay, that though they *are indifferent*, becauſe they are *neither enjoyned nor forbidden by the Law of God in Nature or Scripture*; yet they *are* not *indifferent*, and that becauſe they are *not enjoyned*. So that whilſt our Brethren allow the determination of indifferent things to Authority, they take away with one hand, what they give with the other. For according to their Principles, there is nothing

nothing left for Authority to determine, as to the ordering of Gods Publick Worship. For one would think that the matter of such Determination should be those things, which God hath *left* to our *Liberty*. But you are mistaken, if you think so; since for this very Reason that they are *left at Liberty*, it is unlawful for one Man, be his Authority what it will, so long as it is but Humane Authority, to determine in them for another; and it is unlawful for this other Man to submit to his Determination. For we are told that *the Light of Nature directeth us to use the most convenient Circumstances for the Worship of God, and the Law of Nature will enforce Men in doing Actions, to use Time and Place. For other things, such as the Postures of Prayer, or Words used in Prayer, the Holy Scripture is every where as sufficient to us as the Law of* Moses *was to the* Jews, *which commanded, as to the* Passover, *the offering a Lamb or a Kid, and left it to the discretion and Conveniency of the Offerer to determine which——. So for Standing, Sitting, or Kneeling at Prayer, God indeed hath left the one or the other of them to us not determined, leaving it to our Choice or Conveniency which to use, who sometimes cannot use Standing, another time cannot use Kneeling. He hath commanded us to pray, and that with our Voice, as well as our Hearts; but that he hath not told us what Words we should always use----. God hath therefore left us at liberty what Words to use, as he left the* Jews *at liberty whether to offer a Lamb or a Kid----. And* Moses *might by the same Authority have tyed up all the* Jews *to offer none but Kids, or none but Lambs, as Superiors can tye up Inferiours to use none but such or such Words in Prayer. And the* Jews *might every whit as lawfully have obeyed* Moses *in such a Command, as we can obey any Superiors in such a Case.* That is, it *had been unlawful* in the *Jews to have obeyed* Moses *in such a Case*, and *it would be unlawful* in the Dissenters, and *it is unlawful* in us to *obey our Superiors* in any of their Determinations concerning *things*

Case. p. 29, 30.

in Gods Worship which God hath left at liberty.

How this Author hath pursued his Argument, is not my business to consider. It is sufficient for my design to shew the vast difference between the *grounds upon which* we charge the Church of *Rome* with requiring unlawful Terms of Communion with her in her Worship, and *those upon which* the same fault is imputed to the Church of *England* by the Dissenters. *We* prove our Charge, by shewing, that *God hath forbidden* what that Church requires to be done: *They* prove theirs against us by shewing that *God hath left those things at liberty* which are required in this Church. *We* shew that the Church of *Rome* enjoyns Practices that are *unlawful for any Man to determine himself to*: *They* shew that this Church enjoyns Practices which are *not unlawful* for a Man to chuse *for himself*, but for Authority to chuse for him. The things they except against in our Communion, are *in themselves* indifferent, and they cannot make them unlawful otherwise than by fetching a compass about, and pretending that they are then unlawful to be done, when our Superiors require us to do them.

And now I may leave it to the Judgment of all Men that can consider a Case without great Prejudice, whether there be reason to forsake the Church of *England* upon the account of unlawful Terms of Communion pretended to be in her Worship, as well as upon the same account to leave the Communion of the Church of *Rome*; that is, whether a thing may become unlawful in Gods Worship for not being commanded by God, and for being enjoyned by Man; because every thing that God hath forbidden, is neither lawful to be commanded by Man, nor to be done, though it be so commanded. I know not whether some of our Brothers Party may not think that he hath given us too much advantage, by reducing the Question to this State. But I think it is not *his* Weakness, but the Weakness of *his Cause*, that has led him

him to it. For they are not able to prove the unlawfulness of the present Impositions in order to Communion, but upon such Principles as these are. And I may appeal to Mankind concerning the *Difference of the Case* between *them* against us, and *us* against the Church of *Rome* in this matter; that the Reason of our Separation from *Rome* will not justifie their Separation from us, nor that the Reason upon which we challenge them of *Schism*, can flie in our own Faces, when the *Church of Rome* challengeth us of the same Crime. But I shall say no more of this Point at present, because I foresee occasion of resuming it presently in another place.

But this Author offereth another Reason also of the *Unlawfulness* of those things that are required, and that because they have been and still are used in *Idolatrous Services*, and are *not of themselves necessary* to be used by us. I think I may venture to say, that this Reason has been sufficiently exposed. But my business is to note the *Difference of the Case*: We separate from *Rome*, because otherwise we must communicate with her in her *Idolatry*, which is *necessary not to be done*: The Dissenters separate from us, because otherwise they must do some things *not necessary to be done*, which have been and still are done by *Idolaters*.

Again, the Dissenters, as he says, *Scruple Kneeling in the Act of Receiving the Communion, because there is an Objectum Motivum*, as he calls it, *before their eyes*. I think he means, because the Elements are worshipped by the *Papists*, who say they believe them to be no longer Elements, but God himself. And to Kneel therefore when we take these into our hands, is to give some occasion to others to think that we worship the Elements; and therefore the Dissenters *Question the lawfulness of an Adoration of God under these Circumstances*. I am glad if it be but *Question* and *Scruple*, though I am sorry 'tis so much. But whether they onely scruple *Kneeling* upon this

this account, or more than Scruple it, for this Gentleman does not always speak so distinctly as I could wish: There is however, this difference in the Case; that whereas one principal Reason why we separate from the *Papists*, is because we dare not worship Bread, which *without all Question* is Idolatry; one reason why the Dissenters separate from us, is because we who have so loudly declared against that Idolatry, do worship (not the Bread, which we believe to retain its own Nature, but) God onely, as they *themselves confess*, when we partake of that Bread.

And here I may be content to let the matter rest, that whether we consider the *Particulars* pretended to be unlawful in both Communions; or the *way* taken by us *to prove* those unlawful which the *Church* of *Rome* would impose upon us, and *that way* which the *Dissenters* use to *make out* the like charge against the *Church* of *England*, the difference is so great, that the charge of *Schism* which, upon this account, *viz.* of *Terms of Communion in Worship*, we bring against the Dissenters for separating from us, cannot with Reason and modesty be returned upon our selves for separating from the *Church* of *Rome*.

I have now compared the two Cases, with respect to *Authority* and *Terms of Communion*. But before I proceed to compare them with respect to the *Plea of Conscience*, I shall endeavour to represent some other Differences of the Case that are plainly consequent upon one or both of those Differences which we have already considered. And they are these three:

1. The Difference of the Case, with respect to Separation for *greater purity of Worship and Ordinances*.

2. The Difference with respect to that common Question, *Who shall be the Judge?*

3. The Difference of the Principles upon which either side separates, as to their *tendency either to maintain, or to overthrow one Communion amongst Christians*.

1. With

1. With respect to Separation, for *greater purity* of Worship and Ordinances. The Dissenters say, that *if for greater purity* England *Separated from* Rome, *others also may for greater purity separate from* England. And because I perceive this *Consequence* is insisted upon, not onely by well-meaning People, but by some that would not be thought the meanest of the Party, I shall examine it as throughly as I can; hoping to gain the Readers Pardon, if I repeat some things that have been already discoursed; but which are necessary to be observed, in order to a right understanding of this matter.

The ground I shall proceed upon in discoursing of this *Consequence* is, that we and the Dissenters do not understand the same thing by *greater purity*. By the *Impurity* or *Corruption* of the *Roman* Communion, which is the principal reason of our departing from it, we understand the *Sinfulness* thereof; and by *separating from that Church for greater purity*, we therefore mean forsaking her Communion, that we might not *partake in her Sins*; which otherwise we could not avoid. To make good this charge, that her Communion was and still is *corrupted* in this sence, we have but that one plain way already declared. We shew that there are several *Doctrines* which she *Professeth*, several *Things* in her Worship which she *Practiseth*, that are plainly contrary to the Truth which God hath revealed, and to the Laws which he hath delivered to us: And that those Errors and these Practices, are *not of a slight nature*, but that they grate upon the very Foundations of *Christianity*. And moreover, that she *exacteth the profession* of the one, and *the doing* of the other, from all her Members. So that when we say, that we *separate from that Church for greater purity*, we mean, that there are several *impure* or *sinful* conditions of Communion required in that Church, with which, as she has ordered the matter, we must pollute our selves, and of which we our selves must be guilty, if we communicate with

with her at all: And therefore it was neceſſary for us to depart from her, becauſe it is moſt neceſſary not to deny the Truths, or break the Laws of God. Therefore alſo by ſaying that we ſeparated for greater Purity, we mean not that we have forſaken *but ſome* Corruptions *onely* of the *Roman* Worſhip, as if our Communion were now indeed *purer* than theirs, though not *ſo pure* as it ought to be. This is not our meaning: For we contend that this Church hath purged away all thoſe *Practices*, and aboliſht all thoſe *Rules* relating to Gods Worſhip, which are contrary to his Word; and by conſequence, that there is no *Impurity* left in the Conditions of our Communion; ſo that any Man whoſe Conſcience is rightly informed, may communicate with us without ſin. Wherefore this comparative Expreſſion of ſeparating for *greater purity* from the *Roman* Church, reſpecteth the State of that Church, ſuppoſing indeed that *all* the Conditions of that Churches Communion, were not impure, but withal implying that *ſome* of them, and thoſe truly *not a few*, were ſo; and therefore that her Communion was *not pure enough* for any *Chriſtian* to joyn in it with a good Conſcience. Thus I have ſhewn what we underſtand by ſeparating for greater purity, and how we maintain this Plea in Anſwer to the *Church* of *Rome*.

Now therefore, although the *Diſſenters* uſe the ſame Plea in Words, in Anſwer to us, yet if they do not underſtand the ſame thing by it that we do, nor attempt to make it out by ſhewing wherein our Communion is corrupted with ſuch conditions as oblige the Members of this Church to do what God hath forbidden, or to neglect what he hath commanded them to do, or to contradict what he hath revealed: This Plea, I ſay, if it be not made out by ſuch particulars as theſe, is by them weakly brought to juſtifie their ſeparation from us, by our Example in ſeparating from *Rome*. And though the general pretence may ſerve to delude Injudicious People, who

who have not learnt to distinguish between Reasons and Colours; yet it will neither acquit them before God, nor in the Judgment of Wise Men, who can easily discern, and will impartially consider the Difference of the Case. It is indeed a plausible *Colour* for their Separation from us, that we separated from *Rome* for *greater purity*; and *but* a Colour, unless they could shew wherein our Communion is *Impure*, or which is all one, what are those Conditions thereof which be *sinful* or repugnant to the Laws of God.

But what is it that they mean by this *greater purity of Worship*, for which they separate? Wherein doth this Purity consist? Let Reasonable Men judge. *Extemporary Prayers*, are more pure than *Forms of Prayer*: To *Receive the Communion Sitting* or *Standing*, is more pure than to *Receive it Kneeling*: To *omit the Sign of the Cross after Baptism*, is more pure than to use it: And the Ministers Praying in a *Coat or a Cloak*, is more pure than to Pray in a *Surplice*. But till they can shew that our way, in any of these instances, is forbidden by God, either they cannot justly pretend that *it is impure*; or at least they must confess that they mean by *Impurity*, something else, when they charge it upon us, than what we mean by it, when we charge it upon the Communion of the *Romish* Church, and therefore that they do not use the same Plea against us, that we produce against that. For with us *Impurity* is *Sin*, and an *impure* Communion is a Communion in which *we cannot communicate without sin, i. e.* without transgressing the Law of God. But as far as I can see, *Impurity* with them must go for something else, that is, either for doing things that God hath not forbidden, or for the omitting of things that he hath not commanded. And if the Church hath Power in Indifferent things, and that be *pure*, against which there is *no Law*; their pretence of separating for *greater purity* is altogether groundless, un-

less they can prove that they cannot have Communion with us, without neglecting to do what God commands, or doing what he forbids.

Therefore the former Discourse concerning *Terms of Communion*, shews that there is a vast difference between this Plea, as it is used by us, and as it is used by the *Separatists* against us. For we do not separate from the Communion of the *Roman* Church upon this Principle, that *the Church hath no Power to make Orders for the Worship of God in matters that are left to our liberty*, or *to prescribe Rites and Ceremonies that are not contrary to Gods Word*. But upon this Principle, as far as we can judge, do the *Dissenters* separate from us; and the main Controversie we have with them is, Whether it be within the compass of *Humane* Authority, to prescribe in things of this sort; and consequently, whether it be part of the Duty of *Christians* to submit unto, and in their Practice to comply with such Prescriptions. They will not deny, that we shew that Church of *Rome* where the Scripture forbids what that Church requires, and this, through all those instances of their Corruption in Worship, for which we pretend it necessary for us to depart from her Communion. Now if the Dissenters can shew the like of any Condition in our Communion, I promise to recant all that I have said in behalf of the Church of *England*, under this head of the *purity of her Communion*; and instead of Vindicating my Defence of our Church, as to this particular, to depart from her Communion in that thing, whatever may come of it, from this time forwards. And I trust that through the Grace of God, I should not for the sake of any Worldly Interest, either resist the Evidence of any clear Argument tending to my conviction, or act in contradiction to a convinced Conscience and Judgment, in a matter of this high nature.

But to deal plainly, the *Dissenters* seem to be very sensible of the uneasiness of this Task, that is, of proceeding

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in the same method to convince us of *unlawful* Terms of Communion, which we use against the *Church of Rome*. They go another way to work, and it would make an Indifferent Man suspect their Cause, to see what shifts they use, to make good their Pretence. They demand of us *where Scripture commands*, or *what need* there is of those things, which our Church requires. They pretend that the Liberty of *Christians* does in great part consist in this, that they ought not by *Man* to be determined to any practice in Gods Worship, to which God, or the nature of the thing, has not determined them. They say, that the appointment of *Significant Rites* and *Ceremonies*, is a derogation from the Royalty of *Christ*, and the Sufficiency of the *Scriptures*. And to give some countenance to these pretences, they would perswade us that the Scripture it self intimates some such thing, as if nothing were to be done in Gods Worship, but what is by God himself commanded, excepting always those circumstances necessary to action, the choice whereof must yet be left to every Man, and, as we are now taught, Authority must not so much as meddle with them. To this purpose we are told of the *Pattern in the Mount*, of *strange Fire that was not commanded*, and of the unlawfulness of *adding to, or diminishing from the Law of* Moses: As if these places of Scripture made all Impositions concerning the Order of Divine Worship, as unlawful, as the express Word of God shews so many particular practices of the *Roman* Church in her Worship to be. But leaving these attempts of theirs to be examined in the more particular Controversies: Who sees not what a wide difference there is in the particular management and application of this general Proposition, That we must not communicate with any Church in *Impurity*, between the *Church of England* against the *Papists*, and between the *Dissenters* against the Church of *England*? For we are secure against all just accusation from the Church of *Rome*, if this one

Propoſition be true, That *it is not in the Power of any Church to diſpenſe with the Laws of God, or to abſolve us from our Obligation to keep them.* But the *Diſſenters* cannot avoid the Juſtice of our Charge againſt them, unleſs this Propoſition be true alſo, That *the Church hath no Authority in things of an indifferent nature, to preſcribe ſuch in Divine Service, as ſhall be thought moſt agreeable to the general Rules of Reaſon and Scripture, and moſt ſutable to the great ends of Chriſtianity.* Now if what we ſay in theſe things, will hang well together, that is, if the former Propoſition be true, and if the truth thereof ſhall not hinder the latter from being falſe; then with very good reaſon may we pretend that it was neceſſary for us to ſeparate from *Rome* for *greater purity*, or for the avoiding of ſin: But the Diſſenters will have no juſt ground from our Example to pretend the ſame, in their Separation from the Church of *England*.

And, I think, the Difference is plainly enough confeſs'd by thoſe of the Separation that hold *Occaſional Communion* with our Church to be lawful, that is, who think it lawful to communicate actually with us upon occaſion, though they are all the while Members of Separate Churches. For if our Communion is polluted with ſinful Conditions, how comes it to paſs that this *Occaſional Communion*, as they call it, ſhould be more lawful than *Conſtant* Communion? Unleſs they will ſay it is lawful *ſometimes* to break Gods Commandments, but not lawful to do it *ordinarily*. But I know they will not ſay ſo. And therefore when they ſay that they cannot, without ſin, become Members of our Churches, though without ſin they can ſometimes joyn in our Publick Worſhip; they ſeem to ſuppoſe that the way of Worſhip in the Separate Meetings, is more perfect than ours, in reſpect of thoſe things which do not fall under any particular Law of God, but may be ordered better or worſe, as men are more or leſs prudent, or as they take greater

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or less heed to the general Rules of Reason and Scripture concerning things indifferent. And withal, that there is so much more Gravity, Decency, Simplicity, and Tendency to Edification in the outward mode of their Worship, that it would be a sin to let it fall, or in practice to prefer ours before it. But by this I think any body may see what a Difference there is between what we and these Men mean by the same pretence of *refusing to communicate, where it cannot be done without sin.* For our meaning is, that there are such Conditions of Communion in the Church of *Rome*, that as the Case stands, it would be a Wickedness to communicate with her at any time. But they mean no such thing against us, since without Scruple they can sometimes communicate with us; onely they suppose they have set up a more perfect Communion: and they do not forsake our Communion as unlawful in it self, but they think it their Duty to prefer a better before it. So that in this pretence for Separation, these Men do not understand *Purity* in opposition to *Sin*, or breaking any of Gods Commandments; but *Purity* in opposition to a *less Convenient* or *Prudent* ordering of the outward mode of Worship. That is, they do not understand the same thing by *Separating* from the Communion of a Church for greater purity, that we understand by it: nor can they urge that pretence for Separation from us, as we do urge it against the Church of *Rome*: And consequently our Reason of separating from that Church for *greater purity*, does not hold to justifie their Seperation from us.

Upon consideration of the whole matter, I hope the *Papists* will find no *Protestant* of our Church easie and silly enough to be deluded by such Superficial Colours as these are. "You see, say they, what is become of "leaving the Communion of the Church *for greater* "*purity*. The *Protestants* at first forsook the *Catholick*, "i. e. *Roman* Church for greater purity. And do not

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" the *Presbyterians* forsake the Church of *England* for " greater purity? And so do the *Independents* set up " their *Congregations* for greater purity. And the *Ana-* " *baptists*, for the same reason, depart from them: And " the *Quakers* from them *All:* And there is no end of " breaking Communion upon such pretences as these " are; which are as good against your selves, as they are " against us: and therefore you may chuse whether you " will return to the Church from which you first brake " away, under pretence of *Reformation*, or whether you " will follow your Principle till you are Refined into " *Quakers*, or it may be, into a more absurd and mad " sort of People than the *Quakers* themselves are.

It is a lamentable thing, to see Men of common Understanding couzened by such palpable Fallacies as these are; though it is not to be wondred at, that the Agents of the *Roman* Church make the best use of them they can; since a foul Cause must be beholden to such Artifices as these, to blanch it over.

But I pray, might there not be *such Corruptions* in *your* Church, that we with good reason might pretend it necessary to forsake your Communion for *one that was purer*; and yet there may be none in *ours* to give any Man *Just* cause to leave us upon that pretence? Is it impossible that it should ever be just and necessary to depart from the Communion of a Church, upon the account of her Corruptions, because every man that has a mouth, and can speak, may say if he please, that he separates for greater purity, though there be no reasonable cause to say so? Or does it follow, that because our *Dissenters* are *mistaken* in believing that we have given them sufficient cause to deal by us, as we have done by you, that is, to forsake *our* Communion *for greater purity*, as we have forsaken *yours* upon the same account; that therefore we also must needs proceed upon mistakes in so doing? What if some of them are erroneously perswaded that they

they ought not to submit to *Humane Orders* in the performance of Gods Worship, if there be *no particular Warrant* in Gods Word for them; may not we for all this be sure that your Church requireth Men to do things which God hath *particularly forbidden?* And if we be sure of this upon the plain Grounds of Reason and Scripture, should we be afraid to reject your Communion in these things, because another sort of Men are so unreasonably wilful as to reject our Communion for the sake of things that are nothing like to these?

What if they conceiving that *our Forms of Prayer are not so Edifying*, that *our Rites and Ceremonies are not so expedient*, but rather *unlawful*, as being *Humane Inventions*; what, I say, if they lay so great a stress upon these things as to set up a Communion which they fancy to be more refined and unexceptionable? May they not be *to blame* in all this, and yet the Church of *England not be liable to blame*, but worthy of commendation for departing from you *in your Latin Service, your half Communion, your Praying to Dead Men and Women, your giving Divine Honours to a Wafer*, and *your other gross Superstitions and Idolatries?*

Although our Church had not ordered her publick Worship so discreetly and carefully, but that in sundry things it might be reformed to good purpose; it might yet by no means be necessary for any of her Members to forsake her Communion; but it would on the other hand be their great fault so to do, so long as she holds forth all the necessary means of Salvation, and requires nothing to be professed, or to be done, that is contrary to Gods Word. But yet it would be necessary to renounce the profession of your Impious Errors, and to forsake you in all things wherein your selves have departed from the plain Truths of *Reason* and *Christianity*, and contradicted the plain *Word* and *Laws* of God.

Though it may happen that a Man may do so *foolishly*, as

as to run himself upon great inconvenience in forsaking his Habitation, because there is some *petty* Disease reigning thereabouts, which is known to endanger no mans life; yet it may be *wisely* done by another man, to run his Country when the *Plague* is raging in every corner of it, especially if he could know that it were impossible for him to escape, if he should tarry there any longer: And yet, I suppose, you will not deny but the one as well as the other, may pretend that he left his Dwelling for the sake of *better health*, and *more safety*: But I hope you will grant that the latter pretends this like a *Wise Man*, though the other does it like a *Fool*. The case we are upon, is much what the same. From you it was necessary to depart for the sake of *greater purity*; but so it is not necessary for you or others to depart from us; and yet others may take the same Plea into their mouths against us, and we may not be able to help it; though we can well shew, that they have no good reason for it.

And thus much for the Difference of the Case, with respect to *Separation for greater purity*.

2. I proceed next to consider the Difference with respect to that common Question, *Who shall be the Judge?*

The *Church of Rome* arrogating to her self an *Infallibility* in determining all Questions of Faith, doth in pursuance of this Claim, deny private persons the liberty of examining her *Definitions* by the Holy Scriptures; and requireth them to acquiesce therein without more ado, as there is great reason they should, if indeed they have reason to believe her Infallible. The *Church of England* pretendeth not to Infallibility; but we say, that she is not deceived in those points which she propounds to be believed as necessary to Salvation, nor in rejecting those other Articles which the *Roman* Church propounds under that notion: And agreeably to this pretence she hath translated the Holy Scriptures into *plain English*, which are the best means whereby to judge, if what she says be

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not true; she not onely *alloweth* the People to read them, but *exhorteth* and *requireth* them so to do, and *causeth* them to be *publickly read* to the People in all *Religious Assemblies*. By this means she traineth up her Members to an Ability of Judging, according to their several Capacities; not onely concerning All that she teaches them to believe, but also concerning All that she teaches them to do as their Duty to God or Man: so that she does not bring them up, as the Church of *Rome* Educates her Children to an *Implicit Faith*, and a *Blind Obedience*.

But yet the Superiors of our Church do challenge a Right to Judge in some things for the People committed to their charge, and will not allow, that in those things they should judge for themselves; and they are *All things that relate to Publick Order*, and which may without sin be determined one way or another, but are capable of a better or worse Determination; that is, *All Indifferent things*. We say, that things of this nature being determined by a *Competent Authority*, ought, without farther inquiry into the Reasons of such Determination, to be done by all that are under that Authority. As for the Peoples *Faith* in God, and their *Obedience* to him in doing what he hath commanded, and avoiding what he hath forbidden, our Church does not resolve that into her own Authority, but into those very Reasons upon which they that are in Authority do build their own Faith and Obedience; which Reasons are included in the Holy Scriptures. But as to her Appointments and Orders in all things neither injoyned by God himself, nor by him forbidden, she expecteth submission to them upon the account of her own Authority; and alloweth not us to judge of the *Expediency* or *Inexpediency* of them, before we will conform our Practice to them. All which is so to be understood, that still her Authority in these things is supposed to be of God, and the Duty of submitting thereunto required in the general Precepts of Obedience to Superiors.

Case on behalf of Diff. p. 2. But if any man ask, *Who is to be Judge of things indifferent, as to a mans practice, whether his own Conscience, or his Superior?* I answer, that as to a mans own practice, *himself is to be Judge what things are Indifferent*, and which consequently come within the compass of Humane Authority to determine. For it is plain enough, that by the same Rule which sheweth us what is *Duty*, and what is *Sin*, we come to judge of what is *Indifferent*. And therefore when we grant to private Persons a Judgment of Discretion concerning *Sin* and *Duty*, we cannot deny them the Right to judge what is *neither* Duty *nor* Sin, but *Indifferent*; which is the Sum of what the Author of the *Case in behalf of Dissenters* hath said upon that matter. p. 3.

But then how can Authority pretend to abridge private Persons of *Judging*, as to their own practice, concerning *indifferent* things? To this I answer in the words of the same Author, where he acknowledges his Adversary to have *said well to those who cannot comply with some things required in the Liturgie, and can say no more than that they think them not Decent, not Expedient, not Orderly*; *for*, says he, *no private Person is a Judge of these things*. p. 36. Which is an excellent saying; but so directly contrary to the main principles of his Book, that I wonder how it fell from him. We are then to judge whether the things required by Authority be *indifferent*, that is, *lawful*; and then to judge no farther, *as to our own Practice*: But for the *Decency*, and *Expediency*, and *Orderlineſs* of those things, to leave our Superiours to answer to God for that. Our doing them is warranted by our Rule, which is to obey Authority in all lawful things.

Now it is in things of this sort onely, and with respect to *Order* and *Decency*, and *Prudent* Determination of what is most *likely* to *edifie*, that our Superiors pretend to judge for us what is, and what is not to be done, so as to *allow us no right to judge for our selves about them*.

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They claim Obedience to their Constitutions in these things, upon the account of *their* Authority, which, when the matter is *lawful*, should without more ado, conclude our *Practice*.

Indeed they judge also what *Faith* we are to profess, what *Worship* we are to offer up to God, and what *Life* we are to lead, in order to our receiving the benefit of Church-Communion; and by consequence they do take upon them to judge in our behalf, what are the Articles of the *Christian* Faith, what is the true *Christian* Worship, and what it is to lead a *Christian* Life. For otherwise it were impossible that the Ministers of *Christ* should discreetly and honestly use that Authority which he hath left them to take into the Church those that are duly qualified for it, and to turn out those that are no longer fit to be continued in it. But still there is a great difference between their judging for us in those things, and in the matters afore-mentioned.

For they suppose that the *Articles* of the *Christian Faith*, and the *Commandments* of *God*, are the same that ever they were from the beginning of the Church; and that it is not in the power of Man to make any alterations in these standing Rules of *Christianity*, and that Obedience is not due to any Authority of Man going about to make such alterations. From whence it follows, that private Persons should be able to judge wherein true *Christianity* consists, as well as their Superiors, that they also may offer up unto God a Reasonable Service. To which end the Bible is put into all Mens hands; the meaning of the Scriptures is opened in our Religious Assemblies; the People are trained up to understand the particulars of Christian Faith and Obedience, with the Reasons and Motives thereof, that as we said before, they may be able to resolve their Faith into the same grounds of Divine Authority, upon which the *Bishops* and *Pastors* of the Church do themselves believe. And we do unanimously

acknowledge, that if this Church makes the profession of false Doctrine, or the breaking of any of Gods Commandments, a Condition of her Communion; they that upon this account separate from her Communion, are before God clear of the Guilt of *Schism* in so doing. And here she makes all private Persons Judges for themselves, whether she doth this or not, and that by training them up in the best way she can, to be able to inform themselves in these matters.

But the case is otherwise, with respect to *indifferent* things relating to Gods Worship. For though our Superiors profess that they are not to meddle, in adding to, or taking from the *Faith* and the *Commandments of God*; and though they appeal to private Persons, that they do not in *Fact* usurp an Authority to this purpose, which they *profess* to disclaim; yet in these indifferent things they claim a Power to adde, or diminish, or to make such expedient alterations, as they shall think fit to be made; and this without being any way accountable to the People for their discretion in so doing, before their Orders be obeyed: And we say, that whoever they are that will not be concluded by Authority in these things, but upon any pretence whatsoever taken from them, do break away from the Communion of the Church, they are guilty of *Schism* in so doing. And this must be truly said, if what that Author himself hath said be true, *that no private Person is Judge of those things.*

And now I think any one may see a vast difference between the *claim* of the Church of *Rome*, to be the onely Judge of what she imposes upon her Members, and the *claim* of the Church of *England* to the same, with reference to hers; that in the former case it is unjust and unreasonable; but in the latter, very equal and necessary, and which no Man that is not over-ruled by a Fit of Passion and Prejudice, but must allow to a competent Authority.

Whereas

Whereas therefore we have considered the points in question between the Dissenters and our selves, with respect to *Prudence*, *Expedience*, and *Better Edification*: We say withal, that this is more than we were bound to do in order to the Conviction of Dissenters, that it is their Duty to conform to the *Liturgie* and the *Laws* of the Church. And that because the Authority by which they are establisht obligeth us to Submission (if there be nothing in them to make our Communion with the Church sinful) though we should be so arrogant as to think we could have ordered these matters with more discretion, if *our Advice* had been taken. But if, setting aside the consideration of Authority, we have moreover shewn, that upon all accounts of *Decency* and *Expediency*, *Forms of Prayer* are to be preferred before *Extemporary Prayers*, and that the particulars now excepted against, are so far from betraying any want of Judgment in those that prescribed them, that they are Indications of the great *Wisdom* and *Caution* wherewith they proceeded; we have not, I say, performed this, believing it *necessary* to prove the Separation to be *Unjustifiable*, but intending to shew thereby that it is *more Inexcusable*. And although it was no part of our *Designe* to render *those* of the Separation more Inexcusable by this performance, yet I beseech them to take care that it happens not so in the *Event*.

If after all, it be asked what an Inferior is to do, that judgeth those things to be *Unlawful*, which his Superiors in full perswasion that they are *Indifferent* at least, require him to do? I answer, as all Men that have a sense of Honesty will answer, That whilst he is perswaded that they are unlawful, he ought to forbear them. But then, as no Man of Understanding will deny, he is yet a sinner before God for refusing that Obedience to a Lawful Authority, which he ought to perform; since in order to the performance of

of it, he might and ought to underſtand his Duty better than he does. For as the forementioned Author ſays, p. 3. *Things Indifferent, and Things Commanded and Forbidden, are not Things which we fancy, which indeed are ſo.* If the Light of Nature, and the Holy Scriptures are a Rule of what is *Duty*, and what is Sin they are a Rule alſo of what is Indifferent: And the ſame Light that ſhews what is *neceſſary to be done*, and what is *neceſſary not to be done*, does withal ſhew what is *lawful* to be *done* or to be *forborn*. And as an Erroneous Perſwaſion that ſomething is *lawful* which God hath forbidden, will not acquit any man that hath the means of better Information, from ſin, in doing according to his Perſwaſion of the lawfulneſs of what he does; ſo neither will any mans Erroneous Perſwaſion that his Superiors require him to do what is *unlawful*, when the thing it ſelf is lawful, acquit him of the Guilt of Diſobedience in following that Perſwaſion. In what degrees *this* or *that* Mans Ignorance in theſe things is culpable, God onely knoweth for the moſt part, and therefore he onely can *Judge the World in Righteouſneſs*. But more or leſs culpable it is in *All* that have means of Knowledge. And it concerns every one of us, as we love our own Souls, to conſider impartially what God hath commanded, and what he hath forbidden in his *Word*, and conſequently what he has left to our liberty; and that becauſe his *Word* is a Rule ſufficiently plain, as to theſe things.

For if *thoſe* to whom God hath given *Authority*, being corrupted in their Judgments by Paſſion or any Worldly Intereſt, take thoſe things to be *lawful* which *God hath forbidden*, and impoſe them upon All that are ſubject to their Rule; their Perſwaſion ſhall not hinder their being grievous ſinners againſt God, nor exempt them from being anſwerable to him for *abuſing their Authority*, and for all the pernicious conſequences thereof in *drawing ſome men into wicked Practices*, and in *puniſhing others for*

for well doing. And by like Reason, if *Subjects*, not rightly attending to the Rule of their Duty, are grown to a Perswasion that those things are *unlawful* which their Superiors enjoyn them to do, whereas indeed they are *Indifferent*, and thereupon refuse to do them; this Perswasion shall not acquit them before God, nor hinder them from being answerable for *abusing their Liberty*, and for all the pernicious Consequences of their Disobedience in *Setting a bad Example*, in *Breaking the Peace of the Church*, in *Disturbing Publick Order*, and, which very often happens, in *Giving occasion to the worst of Men to profane the Name of God, and to speak evil and blasphemous things of his Holy Religion.* I say, Ignorance will help no more in this latter Case than in the former, because it is as easie for the *Subject* to know what is *Indifferent*, as for the *Ruler* to know what is *Unlawful*. These Considerations, I confess, do more properly belong to the last Plea of *Conscience*; but it was very convenient to touch upon them here, where we have been inquiring what things they are, in which Authority is to over-rule private Judgment, and to determine the Practice of Inferiors; and withal, how great a difference there is between the Church of *Rome*, and the Church of *England*, in answering this common Question, *Who shall be the Judge?*

3. I come now to the last Difference consequent upon the *two first*, respecting *Authority* and *Terms of Communion*, and that is the *Difference of the Principles upon which each side Separates, as to their tendency either to maintain, or to overthrow one Communion amongst Christians.*

This will fall under a double Consideration. 1. That of maintaining one Communion amongst Christians in this Kingdom. 2. That of maintaining one Communion with Forreign Churches. I shall begin with the First.

1. As

1. As to *Unity at home.* The *Romaniſt* pretends that upon the grounds of *our Reformation,* Diviſions and Separations will be endleſs amongſt us; *We* alſo pretend that the Principles of the *Separation from the Church of England,* tend to the ſame: But with what difference of Reaſon on each ſide, it is eaſie to judge by what has been ſaid already. We have reaſon to think there would be no end of Diviſions, if a *Competent Authority,* injoyning nothing but what is *lawful* to be done in the Communion of *Chriſtians,* is not to be obeyed: And certainly this may be very true, although it be falſe, that to Submit to the Authority of the *Roman* Church, and that too in things unlawful to be done by any *Chriſtian,* or by any *Man,* is neceſſary to prevent Diviſions. We ſay farther, that there can be no need of an *Eccleſiaſtical Tyranny* on the one hand, and a *blind Obedience* on the other, to keep thoſe *Chriſtians* together in one Communion that live within one *Juriſdiction*; if a *due* uſe of Authority in lawful Superiors on the one hand, and a *dutiful Subjection* of Inferiors thereunto on the other, would do the buſineſs, as moſt certainly it would. But if ſome Men will be *ſtubborn,* we cannot help that, any more than we can hinder other Men from being *Tyrants.* But we are ſure it concerns both the one and the other, as much as their Salvation concerns them, not to be ſo. And if this conſideration will not keep them within bounds, and make them Wiſe and Honeſt; they muſt anſwer it to God one day. And in the mean time, *Subjects* that ſuffer *unjuſtly* for refuſing to Obey the *Wicked* Command of their Superiors, muſt bear it as patiently as they can, and by their *Prayers to God,* and their *meek Obedience to their Rulers* in all *lawful* things, endeavour to recover themſelves into their good Opinion. And *Superiors* that are vexed with Froward and Diſorderly Subjects who break *Chriſtian* Communion, when no juſt Cauſe is given them, muſt do what they can to lay the

the Truth before them; and if this be to no purpose, they must use their Authority as prudently as they can, to prevent the evil Example from going farther.

We are sensible what advantages the *Papists* make to themselves against our Reformation by the Examples of *Dissenters*, and the *Dissenters* by the *Papists*. When the *Papists* have Men and Women of weak Understandings to deal with, they tell them, that *the Reformation* is run out into several *Sects* and *Parties*, and no Man can tell where Separation will end: If therefore you love *Unity*, return to the Church of *Rome* where we are all of one Faith and Communion. The *Separatists* on the other side set off their Claims to an unrestrainable Liberty of chusing in what Communion to worship God, by shewing to their Proselytes the *Tyranny* of the *Roman* Church. Now we of the Church of *England* are as much against the *Tyrannical Usurpations* of that Church, as the *Dissenters*, and as much for *Unity against causless Separation*, and for *Obedience* to lawful Authority *against Stubbornness*, as the *Romanists*. And both these upon Principles that consist well with one another. We say on the one side, that a Foreigner should not affect an Authority over us, and that those who have the Authority, ought to require nothing in the Communion of *Christians*, but what is agreeable to Gods Word, and lawful to be done: And on the other side, that in such things we ought to do what is commanded, and by no means to run into a Separate Communion. Upon these Principles we departed from *Rome*, and stick where we are; and I trust that through the Grace of God, we shall neither go back to *Rome*, nor run after the *Separation*, there being no need either of the former to preserve *Unity*, or of the latter to avoid *Tyranny*.

To draw to a conclusion of this matter: The main Reason of our Separation from *Rome*, was this, that we could not continue in her Communion, without doing

things that God hath plainly forbidden: The Reformation of our Church was at first effected by, and hath all along stood upon good and just Authority: She does not onely hold forth all necessary means of Salvation, but she requires nothing to be done in her Communion that is contrary to Gods Word. And therefore we hold our selves bound under the pain of *Schism* to continue in her Communion. Now I do not understand how upon these Principles Men must run into *Endless Separations*, unless it be impossible for us (whatever we pretend) to know who are our Lawful Governours, and to know what God hath commanded, and what he hath forbidden us to do. And I must confess if these things be impossible to be known 'tis a foolish thing for any Man to trouble his Conscience with Cases of *Communion* and *Separation*. As for the Dissenters (to omit the *Independents*, whose Churches are in their very Constitution inconsistent with submitting to a common Authority in matters of Worship) they have forsaken us for nothing, but because the Terms of our Worship, or our two or three *Ceremonies* in it, are not commanded in Gods Word, and because in things left otherwise to our liberty, we are determined by the Authority of our Superiors: Or because these things might be better ordered, and because the Communion which they have taken upon them to set up in Opposition to the Church of *England*, is *purer* than ours, though ours be a Lawful Communion. Now these Principles do indeed tend to Endless Separations, unless these Men could tell us either how we could be United in one Communion, though *all of us believed it unlawful to Obey a Competent Authority that should presume to determine any indifferent things relating to Gods Worship*; or *what particular Communion that is from which it would be unlawful to separate even upon* this Principle; *That there is no Obligation to Communion, where there is any thing possible to be mended in the outward*

Mode

Mode of Gods Worship. In a word, they that separate upon just and necessary causes, as the *Church of England* hath done from the *Church of Rome*, and stop there, are not to be charged with the consequence of their practice, who separate without such causes, as the *Dissenters* do from *our Church*. And if they have proceeded farther than they are able to justifie themselves by the Principles of our Reformation, they must answer for it themselves.

2. The Principles of *our Reformation* do not obstruct our Communion with any true Church of *Christ* abroad, where there are no unlawful Terms of Communion. But so do the Principles of the *Dissenters Separation*.

By the same reason that our Governours determine one common Order of Worship and Discipline for the Churches over which they have Authority; the Governours of other Churches also may determine in these things, according to their Prudence for the People subject to their Authority. And we, who blame the *Church* of *Rome* for interposing her Authority amongst us, with whom she has no more Right to meddle than any other Forreign Church has, must in all things that come within the Liberty of Christians, leave other *Churches* that are as *Independent* upon *Us* as we are upon *Rome*, to their Authority and Liberty. And this is what our Church has expresly declared. *In these our doings we condemn not other Nations, nor prescribe any thing but to our own People onely, for we think it convenient that every Country should use such Ceremonies as they shall think best to the setting forth of Gods Honour and Glory, and to the reducing of the People to a most Perfect and Godly living without Error or Superstition, and that they should put away other things, which from time to time they perceive to be most abused, as in Mens Ordinances it often chanceth diversly in divers Countries.* In pursuance of which excellent and truly *Catholick* Declaration, I would not onely communicate Preface to the Liturgy.

with Foreign Churches, who differ from us in nothing but matters of *Form* and *Ceremony*; but if I were amongst them, I should observe their Establish'd *Modes* and *Forms* of Worship; and though I thought our own way at home worthy upon all the accounts of *Order* and *Decency* and *Tendency* to *Edification*, to be preferred before theirs, yet I should not onely conform to their way, but Religiously abstain from creating any prejudice against it in the minds of *Christian* People in those places; and rather do all that *honestly* I could to bring those to a favourable opinion of it, who were prejudiced against it. This is that Rule which St. *Austin* thought should take place, not onely in respect of those *Orders* which were Establish'd by *Synods of Bishops*, but in respect also of those *Customs* which had crept into particular Churches, though it was hard to tell *why* or *how* they came in. *In things of this nature*, saith he, *there is one most wholsom Rule to be observed, That where-ever we see any of them obtain, which are neither contrary to Faith nor good Manners, and have some tendency to Edification, we should not onely abstain from finding fault with them, but commend and practise them our selves.* And yet he complains in this very *Epistle* of the multitude of Ceremonious Observations, in which particular Churches differed from one another, and wishes that a Reformation were made by Authority. Thus in the foregoing Epistle, speaking of the different observations of divers places, for instance, that *some fast upon the Saturday*, and *some do* not, &c. and of all other things of this kind which are *to be accounted indifferent*; *Nothing*, says he, *does more become the Gravity and Prudence of a Christian, than to do after the manner of that Church into which he shall happen to come.* Then he relates St. *Ambrose* his celebrated Answer to *Monica* about things of this sort: *When I am at* Rome, *I fast on the* Saturday, *when I am here at* Milan, *I do not fast. And so when thou comest into any Church, observe its Customs, if thou*

Ad Januarium Ep. 119.

Ep. 118.

thou wouldeſt neither give juſt cauſe of Offence, nor take Offence without cauſe. This advice St. *Auſtin* magnified highly, and the more he thought of it, the better he liked it. *For*, ſays he, *I have often with great ſorrow conſidered how the minds of Weak Chriſtians have been diſturbed by the quarrelſome Humour and ſuperſtitious Niceneſs of ſome of the Brethren, who upon very ſlight grounds of Reaſoning, or being addicted to their own Cuſtoms at home, or fond of what they have obſerved abroad, raiſe ſuch wrangling Diſputes about things that cannot be clearly determined either by the Authority of Holy Scripture, or the Univerſal Tradition of the* Church Catholick, *or by the conſideration of what is beſt for Reformation of Life, that they ſeem to reckon nothing well done, but what they do themſelves.* I ſhall add no more but that plain Rule he gives elſewhere, to this purpoſe: *As to things in which the Scripture defines nothing certain one way or the other, the cuſtom of the Church, and the Decrees of Superiors, are to be held for Law.* *Ad Caſulanum* Ep. 86.

Now by this and much more that might be produced, we may ſee what the true Notion of that *Liberty* was which *the Ancient Church* allowed in matters of Indifference. Not that there was no Rule in the particular Churches for the Ordering and Regulating of things of this ſort: For we find the Biſhops did uſe their Authority in theſe things, over their charges, as St. *Ambroſe*'s Words to St. *Auſtin*'s Mother about the forementioned Caſe, do plainly imply. *Reſiſt not thy Biſhop in this matter; but what he does, that do thou without any Scruple or Diſpute:* And beſides thoſe *particular cuſtoms*, the variety and multitude of which St. *Auſtin* complains of, there were the *Determinations of Epiſcopal Synods* concerning things not determined in Scripture, which he does not complain of. But their Liberty conſiſted in this, that the Rules of this ſort eſtabliſht in the Communion of any Church, were not impoſed upon *Foreign* Churches; and Catholick Communion was Ep. 86. Ep. 119.

not

not broken upon the account of different Rites and Customs. For though St. *Austin* was sorry to see the minds of some weak Christians troubled about Questions of this kind, yet I do not find that he had any occasion given him to complain that Communion was broken upon these accounts; as before his time it had been, by Pope *Victor*'s rashness in presuming to Excommunicate the *Asiatick* Bishops, for observing *Easter* upon the fourteenth of *March*, had not *Irenæus* and other wise and moderate Persons seasonably interposed.

To apply all this to the matter in hand: Since the Church of *Rome* has made such things Conditions of Communion with her as are in St. *Austin*'s phrase *contrary to Faith and Good Manners*, our Separation from her upon this account, does not at all hinder us from communicating with any true Church in the World, that does not bar us out by Unlawful Terms of Communion. For in things that *God* hath left at *liberty*, this Church presumes not to interpose her Authority *abroad*, nor refuses the Communion of those Churches whose Customs and Observations are *different* from ours meerly because they are *different*. Nay, let the Church of *Rome* her self make an end of Imposing *False Doctrines* and *Wicked Practices*, and there will be an end of our *Separation* from her: Let her give over commanding things that God hath forbidden, and making Articles of Faith of things that are not revealed, but are indeed contrary to Sence and Reason, and she may for us use her Authority *at home* in things *indifferent*; and though she be guilty of *great Abuses* even in this kind, which need a *Reformation*, yet I for my part should not break Communion with her for these things, if she would throughly purge her self from the other. In the mean time we are of one Communion with all *Foreign* Churches that presume not to change the *Faith*, nor to contradict the Laws of God; and this we should demonstrate

strate by actual Communion with them, if we had occasion to go abroad amongst them.

But this makes our Case very different from that of the Dissenters, who separate from the Church. For so long as they withdraw from our Communion for the sake of *Ecclesiastical* Orders that are not contrary to Gods Word, and separate from us upon this Principle, that every thing is unlawful in Gods Worship which is not commanded in Scripture, but enjoyned by our Superiors onely; they must not upon those Principles have communicated with any Church in the *Primitive* times, when there were far more *Uncommanded Rites* and *Usages* establish'd, for the regulating of Worship, than now there are in our Church. And upon these Principles they must not Communicate with any *Reformed* Churches abroad, since how different soever the External *Mode* of their Worship may be from ours, yet some they all have, and that consisting of Rules not determined by Gods Word, but by the *Law* or *Custom* of Man. To *New England* they must not go, hoping to find a Communion there lawful to be embraced upon these Principles. The *Nonconformists* to our *Liturgie* and *Discipline* that are there, will stand to their own Orders concerning *Worship* and *Discipline*, and will make out by their Church-Authority such as it is, what they cannot shew *Chapter* and *Verse* for. Our Separatists if they go thither, shall find no other *use* of their *Liberty* allowed there, but *Conformity* and *Compliance* with that way of Worship and Government which there obtains. It is a plain Case, that they who separate from our Church upon the account of Uncommanded Rites and Practices in Gods Worship, are something more obliged by this Principle to avoid Communion with all Foreign Churches; if Rules for Customs concerning things Indifferent, are to be found amongst them all, as most certainly such Rules, more or fewer, all of them have: For in the former

mer Case our *Separatists* are disobedient to their *proper Governours* and *Pastors*, whose Authority over them is more clear and indisputable, than that of the *Governours* of *other Churches* where they might happen to go. And therefore if they will not in things of this nature, be determined by an Authority *at home*, there is less reason to believe their Consciences will suffer them to be determined therein by one *abroad*. I conclude therefore, that though *our Reformation* leaves us free to Communicate with all Churches abroad, that do not require sinful Terms of Communion, as the Church of *Rome* does; yet the *Separation of the Dissenters* from us, proceeds upon grounds destructive of Communion with any Church in the World.

Indeed I believe most of our Dissenters would Communicate with several *Reformed Churches abroad*, but in so doing, they must depart from the Principles upon which they separate *at home*; unless they can find a Reformed Church which exerciseth no Authority in *Forms* of Prayer, nor in *any indifferent* things for the external Regulation of Publick Worship. But where such a Church is to be found, I am yet to be informed.

And thus much concerning those Differences of the Case, that are consequent upon the Difference in point of *Authority* and of *Terms* of *Communion*.

3. I come now to consider the last Plea I propounded, which I confessed was not onely *common* to both sides, but which also may be as *truly alledged* on the one side, as on the other. And that is the Plea of *Conscience*.

The Dissenters say, that they separate from us, being perswaded that they ought so to do. And I must needs say, that some degree of Integrity is implied in this Plea, if honestly it be made; and such a degree it is, as without which no man can be an honest man. And therefore instead of going about to make it questionable whether indeed it be out of *Conscience* that they generally separate

ſeparate from us; I ſhall here admit it, adding onely that it ſtands every one of them in hand, to be as ſure as they can be, that there is this Reaſon at leaſt for their Separation from us. And I hope none of them will take this Admonition in ill part, ſince I charge my ſelf, and deſire all the People of our own Communion, to be careful that we be fully perſwaded in our own minds, that in Duty to God we are bound to ſeparate even from the Church of *Rome*; and that we do not either chuſe one Communion, or refuſe another, for Carnal and Worldly Intereſt. For we ſay the very ſame thing, *viz.* That in *Conſcience* we are perſwaded, that to forſake the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and of every Church in her Communion, as the Terms of her Communion now ſtand, is a neceſſary Duty. But then if we had no more to ſay for our ſelves than this comes to, we ſhould make but a very weak *Apologie* for our Separation from the *Roman* Church, and have ſome reaſon to be aſhamed of it.

For, to deal plainly, this is no more than what a *Turk* or a *Jew* may ſay for refuſing to become a *Chriſtian*, and no more than what he may truly ſay too; that is, that his *Conſcience* will not let him be a *Chriſtian*, ſince he is verily perſwaded that *Chriſtianity* is not from God, ſo far as it is contrary to the Religion by him profeſſed. Now this, if it be truly ſaid, ſhall make him a *more honeſt Turk* or *Jew*, than another that is in his Conſcience convinced of the Truth, which with his mouth he denies, yet it ſhall not make *that* which he *profeſſes*, to be more true in *his* mouth, than it is in the mouth of a *Hypocrite*. And I ſuppoſe no *Chriſtian* will ſay, that his pretence of Conſcience, though it be not meer pretence, will acquit him of ſin in rejecting the Goſpel of *Chriſt* when it's offered to him with reaſonable Evidence. From whence I think it follows, that the *Miſ-information of his Conſcience*, or his *erroneous*

perſwaſion is his *Sin*. And therefore though it be true that we do ſeparate from the *Roman* Communion out of Conſcience, yet whether we do well upon the whole matter in this or not, muſt be judged of by thoſe reaſons upon which we are perſwaded that ſo we ought to do, and not meerly by our perſwaſion it ſelf. For otherwiſe we ſhould lay down a principle that would vindicate a man in the greateſt Errors that can be profeſs'd, and juſtifie him in the moſt wicked things that can be done under an erroneous perſwaſion that thoſe are not *Errors*, and that theſe are not *wicked* things.

Wherefore I beſeech all thoſe that forſake the Communion of the *Church of England*, upon a *general* and looſe perſwaſion of which they are able to give little or no *particular* account, that they do well in forſaking us, and that they ſhould ſin in Communicating with us: I beſeech them, I ſay, to lay this to heart, and a moſt evident truth it is, that if their perſwaſion be Erroneous, they are notwithſtanding their perſwaſion, guilty of *Schiſm*: And withal, that if they are perſwaded this is no great matter, as I plainly perceive they are for the moſt part, yet if *Schiſm* be a very great and aggravated ſin, neither will their *Ignorance* acquit them of *guilt* proportionable to the heinous nature of the ſin. For my part I ſhould not envy their ſafety, could I believe they had reaſon to be ſecure upon giving this account of their Separation, and that honeſtly too, that *they are ſatisfied in Conſcience* about it, and there is an end. But I have reaſon to warn them of the Danger of ſuch Preſumption, ſince many of the *Jews* and *Heathens* that delivered up the Servants of *Chriſt* to be killed for their Profeſſion, were doubtleſs ſatisfied in Conſcience, that they did God Service in ſo doing. And for ought I know, ſome that have ſerved the ends of the Bloudy Church of *Rome*, may have been ſo perſwaded too. But do you think that God will give them thanks for what they did, becauſe

of their good meaning? And if you do not think so, you have no reason to conclude that you shall be acquitted from your Separation, if a *sin* it be, and a *great one* too, meerly because you do not believe it to be a matter of any great consequence, or indeed any fault at all, but rather a Duty.

I do not know to what purpose Divine Truth is made known to us by *Nature* and by *Scripture*, and the Laws of God are written upon our *Hearts*, and these and more Laws beside written in the *Gospel*, if we might yet be safely ignorant of our Duty as we are *Men*, or as we are *Christians*, and of that *Truth* which is necessary to the performance of that Duty. To what end hath God made *known* his *Will*, and given us the *means* of knowing it, and a *Reasonable* nature to make us capable of using those means, if Ignorance might still be pleaded in our Justification? For my part, I cannot tell, and let him that cannot look to it, that no Prejudice, nor Passion, nor Laziness, nor Worldly Interest lie at the bottom of his Heart, either to hinder his searching, or if he searches, to hinder his finding out that Divine Truth, which is the Rule of his Duty. I say this the rather, because no body will deny that it is well said. But it fares with this as it does with many other good Sayings, it is still by all acknowledged to be *good*, but it is by few well applied. But thus far at least I may desire those of the Separation to apply it to themselves, that if they *unnecessarily* divide themselves from the Communion of this Church, the Perswasion of their Conscience that they are bound to divide from us, will by no means bring them off in so doing from the Condemnation that belongs to *that sin*.

To break the Communion of *Christians* is quite contrary to the Ordinance and Institution of *Christ*, who made his Church *one Body*; and the Consequences of it are very destructive of all the great ends of *Christianity*,

and in such cases the blame is very great where-ever it lies; and I will be bold to say, it could not be very great, if it were hard for an honest and unprejudiced mind to find what ought, and what ought not to be done to maintain *Unity of Communion* amongst *Christians*. And therefore it concerns every man, as he tenders the salvation of his Soul, to look to it, that the Cause of his Separation be just. For this is one of those Cases wherein a meer Perswasion of Conscience will not secure a man acting according to it, from sinning against God. And from hence it is evident, that this Plea that we cannot in *Conscience* hold Communion with the *Church of Rome*, may in our mouths be a very good Plea against the *Papists*, as without question it is, if our Consciences are rightly informed as to the Points controverted between them and us: But the same Plea in the mouths of the *Dissenters* against the Church of *England*, may not be good, as most certainly it is not, if they are perswaded that our Church hath given them just cause for their Separation, when there is indeed no such matter. And therefore we may at least hope that they will all of them now seriously apply themselves to consider the merits of the Cause between them and us; which they are now in an especial manner bound to do, since the Charity of the *Ministers* of this City hath made the doing of it easie to all Persons that will be at the pains to judge for themselves, and that by bringing down the particular Questions in Controversie between them and us, to the Capacity of *Ordinary Christians*. And if they will not use this Opportunity that is given them to consider these things, they will have the more to answer to God; and they most of all, that disswade them from it.

To conclude this Point: Whereas the *Papists* declaim against our Separation from them, under pretence of *Conscience*, as if this had shewn the way to all sorts

ſorts of *Sectaries* to ſeparate from us upon the ſame pretence: We hope that all Perſons who are not willing to be deceived, will be able to diſtinguiſh between a *miſguided* Conſcience on the one hand, and a *well-informed Conſcience* on the other; and then proceed to examine the *Reaſons* of our Separation, whether they be not *Juſt* and *Neceſſary*: and if they find them ſo to be, that they will acquit us from all their blame, who ſeparate without *ſuch Reaſons*. For it is very fooliſh and unjuſt, not to allow the pretence of Conſcience to be good in any Caſe, becauſe it is not ſo in all Caſes. Surely if one mans Conſcience tell him that he may and ought to Rebel, while himſelf does not believe that 'tis *Rebellion* he is going about; this hinders not, but another man may lawfully and juſtly pretend Conſcience for his *Loyalty* and Duty to the Government. And though in ſome places of the World there are Soveraign Princes who extend their Authority for the maintaining of *Damnable Errors*, and the ſuppreſſing of Gods *Holy Truth*, and all the while believe that they uſe their Power as they ought to do; yet this ſhall not hinder but that Princes who believe and profeſs the true Religion, and withal protect and encourage it with their Authority as much as they can, being fully perſwaded that ſo they ought to do, that they, I ſay, ſhall for this receive Gods Thanks and Rewards, while the former ſhall go without them. In like manner *Conſcience* may be pretended for diſobeying the juſt Laws of that Authority which God hath ſet in the World, and in the Church; but this ſhall not hinder his Plea from being good, who pretends Conſcience for refuſing to commit *Idolatry*, though all the Powers under Heaven ſhould require him ſo to do. Men may by miſtake, think they do God good Service in murdering his Servants; for this has been done by you of the Church of *Rome*. And if in ſuch *plain* Caſes as theſe, your

your understandings have been so foully corrupted, it is not so greatly to be wondred at, that the Judgments of other Men are so perverted by Interest and Passion, as to believe themselves *countermanded* by *God* in things *required* by their *Superiors*; but in which it would *not be their Sin*, but a *performance of their Duty* to obey. And yet I hope this Answer, *Whether it be better to Obey God or Man, judge ye*, was once truly and pertinently made, and may be so again. And so much for the Difference of the Case, with respect to Conscience; which was the last thing to be considered.

And now I know that all this will signifie very little to any man that brings not an honest mind with him to consider it, or who had rather take his Opinions in these things upon Trust, than be at the pains to judge for himself. But why should a Man disparage himself so much, as not to use that Understanding which God hath given him in matters that concern his Salvation? Why should he be such an Enemy to himself, as not to let go a dangerous mistake, when he may enjoy the Truth instead of it, if he will use Reasonable Diligence to consider what is said on both sides? Give me leave to put you in mind of your Duty in this Case, in the words of an Ancient *Christian* Writer: *In all matters of Practice and Duty, it concerns every man to use his own Judgment and Discretion, in searching for Truth, and in weighing what is fit to be done, rather than to be betrayed into Error and Sin, by such a credulous reliance upon others, as if himself had not the Reason of a Man, and were incapable of Consideration.* God *has given to every Man his share of Wit both to find out some things by himself, and to weigh those which he hears from others. 'Tis natural to all men to love Wisdom, and to desire the knowledge of the Truth. And they make Fools of themselves, who without discretion take the Words of their Leaders for all that they say, and follow them more like Beasts, than like Reasonable Creatures;*

Lactant. lib. 2. De Origine Erroris. Sect 7.

tures; which words are not so to be taken, as if it were *Dishonourable* or *Dangerous* to any man to make use of the help of others in learning the Truth: For this were to destroy the use of the *Ministry* in the Church of *Christ*, and to take away the benefit of mutual endeavours to lead one another into a right understanding of our Duty. But for all this, it may be a very Foolish and Unmanly part, and it may betray us into very dangerous Errors, not to use our own Judgment at all in matters of *Sin* and *Duty*, and in *Opinions* leading to the one or the other; but instead thereof, to rely altogether upon their Authority whom we have taken for our Guides. This is what we say both to the People of the *Popish* and of the *Dissenting* Party; that if they would apply themselves with ordinary diligence, and with a sincere Mind, to find out the Truth in these Cases, they would not meet with any great difficulty to perplex them in the way; especially if they whose Authority they very much rely upon, would speak as plainly and clearly to the Points in Question, as, without Vanity I may say, we have hitherto done.

We do not desire them to stop their Ears against those whom they follow at present: All that we beg of them is, that they would not take every thing upon Trust, that others tell them in these matters, but hear what we also have to offer to them, and not onely hear, but consider and weigh it with the best Judgment they have. And let me say this to all those whom I now speak of, whether *Papists* or *Dissenters*, that if you set your selves with a sincere desire of being rightly informed, to compare our Reasons with them whom hitherto you have trusted, some advantage you will gain by it, whatever the success be. For *if the Truth be not on our side*, you will in all likelihood get this benefit by it, to be confirmed in your own way, upon better grounds than you had before. But *if it be*, it is then to be hoped

hoped that through the Grace of God you will discern it and entertain it, for which blessing you and we shall have great reason to yield our hearty Thanks and Praises to the *Father of Lights*, who *giveth Wisdom to them that ask him*. But if you should be so unhappily prejudiced on the wrong side as to miss this benefit, yet let me tell you it will turn to some good account for you at last, that you took pains to be better informed; and that you were not altogether wanting to your selves to come to a right understanding of your Duty in these particulars, by disposing your selves to Impartiality, and by *Reading*, and *Meditating*, and *Praying* in all this, for the Illumination of Gods Holy Spirit.

And now, I trust, there is little need to tell you, that if your Leaders discourage you from taking this pains, it may justly make you suspect that your Cause will not bear the Trial. If they would keep up *your* Confidence by *their own*, and all the while divert you from comparing one thing with another, and from trying what is said on both sides; you have sufficient cause to question either their Honesty or their Understanding. And the more unwilling they are that you should examine what we and they say, the more Reason do they give you to resolve that you will do so.

I have shewn how greatly different the Case of the True *English Protestant* is from that of the *Papist* on the one hand, and that of the *Separatist* on the other. And though the difference be so very notorious as it is, yet we know the *Popish Priests* have represented our Reformation under such Colours, as to make it look like *Fanaticism*, and the *Dissenters* are made to believe on the other hand that our Reformation is but a better sort of *Popery*. And some little popular things are said on both sides to make these pretences look like Truth. But now I have brought these Colours into the Light; and if you will but take upon your selves to use your own

Eyes,

Eyes, you may, I think, easily discern that you have been all this while abused. At least, I have given you Reason enough to make farther Inquiries, and to consider more particular Questions. But if upon reading this general Discourse, you should resolve to keep where you are, and to trouble your selves no farther; I am confident the true reason thereof must be this, that you are afraid to proceed, lest you should be convinced: and this is nothing less than *Wilfully* to bar up your minds against the knowledge of the Truth. For though I have no conceit of this performance, as if I had done any great matter in it, yet I am conscious to my self that I intended honestly all along; and I am sure I have written plainly, and have laid some things together that may give just occasion to any well-meaning *Papist* or *Sectary* to question the safety of the way he is in at present, especially if he has never troubled himself to consider these things before.

And now I do heartily desire you all, for I cannot desire this too often or too earnestly, that you would take the Word of God for your Rule, and propound the Rewards of another Life for your end, and set the Fear of God before your Eyes, whilst you consider and examine these things. It is our concern for the *safety of your Souls*, as well as for the *Welfare* of this Poor Church, so distressed with Adversaries on both sides, that putteth us forward upon all occasions to lay these things before you. Do not therefore read these Books, which are indeed published for *your sakes*, as if they were written *against you*. There is not one of us, I am confident, but is troubled to see you expose your selves to the Penalties of the Laws of the Land that are against you; but we are more sorry to consider, that at the same time you do also incur the high displeasure of God. We would fain have you to avoid both the one and the other. And if you would hearken to us, the worst you would get by it, is to live

with leſs diſturbance in this World; but whether that ſhould prove true or not, you would walk in a more ſafe and plain way to Heaven, than that which any of you are in at preſent. And I hope you would not grudge that good which this Church ſhould receive by your return to us, when you would do your ſelves ſo much more by it.

If therefore you think our Importunity troubleſom, pray remember what it is that makes us importunate; and let no miſconſtruction of the Deſign of your Friends, render their honeſt Endeavours ineffectual to your Conviction. We would have you underſtand the Truth, and do your Duty; and as this end is charitable, ſo you muſt needs grant thoſe means to be charitable alſo, by which we are contributing towards it. It is indeed our Concern, that theſe means ſhould take place; but it is yours ſomething more, if you are under great and dangerous miſtakes, as I am perſwaded you are. But if you ſhould be ſo prejudiced againſt us, as to think that we write theſe Controverſies more in concern for the Temporal Intereſts of this Church, than for your Spiritual Good; Pray will you make this profitable uſe of that hard thought, as to excel us in this matter, by being more careful not to mix any carnal and worldly Affection with your Judgment in *Reading* theſe things, than you imagine us to be in *Writing* of them. Be as ſtrict as you will in Examining what we ſay in behalf of our Church; onely be willing that Truth ſhould overcome; and conſider that if that prevails againſt your Errors, you indeed are the *Conquerors*, and that the greateſt Gain will be yours, both in this World, and in the World to come.

I have no mind to pre-judge which Party it is that we may hope to win more of to the Truth, than of the other; being very willing to believe that there is no cauſe of deſpairing to do good on either ſide.

As for the *Diſſenters*, methinks it ſhould not be hard to diſſwade the moſt of them from breaking the Communion

nion of that Church any longer, with which they agree in the *substance* of *Faith* and *Worship*, and from differing with *Authority* for the future about things *indifferent*. The cause of the Separation, as it is managed by themselves, is so very slight, that one would hope they should be of themselves something afraid to venture their being *Schismaticks* upon it, and consequently that they should be ready to consider what has been said to shew that there is indeed no just Cause given them to separate from our Church; and that there is no reason to call any thing *Popery*, which they dislike in our Communion, as some of them have done, to the great disadvantage of the *Protestant Religion*; since as much as in them lay, they have made the World believe that the Cause of Popery is better than it is; and that it doth not consist onely of Opinions and Practices that cannot be defended, but of some also that may. And it is not the least kindness that the indiscreet Zeal of some *Protestants* hath done to the Church of *Rome*; that they have inveighed against some things, which may be easily justified, as if they also were *Popish Corruptions*. And the Learned Men of that Church have not been behind hand in making use of this advantage, and that by straining their utmost Wit, to represent the *Protestant Religion* under such Colours, as if it stood in opposition to *Episcopacy* and *Liturgie*, and to all *Ecclesiastical Canons* and *Constitutions*. And I am perswaded the *Dissenters* cannot do the *Protestant* Religion a greater kindness, than by forbearing to give them this occasion for the future. For let a Cause be never so good in it self, it is never likely to thrive in their hands, who instead of pressing their Adversaries with what they can never maintain, are still forward to deny what they are well able to prove.

As for the *Papists* amongst us, their mistakes in Faith and Worship are so gross and foul, that if they would give themselves a little time to consider what has, and what

what may farther be ſaid to convince them; I do not doubt but all of them that are endued with a competent Underſtanding, and an honeſt Senſe of things, would ſoon feel thoſe palpable Errors, into the belief and practice of which they have been hitherto deluded, by an unreaſonable deference to the Authority of the Church of *Rome*; and no longer ſtand off from the Communion of the Church of *England*. The bigger any fault is, one would think, it ſhould be more eaſily ſpied. Now theſe men ſeparate from us, meerly becauſe we have abandoned thoſe wicked Doctrines and Practices, which are of themſelves a moſt neceſſary Cauſe of Separation from any Church in the World that ſhould impoſe them: And therefore they of all men, are the moſt Notorious *Schiſmaticks* that can be imagined. And I beſeech God to open their Eyes to ſee it, and to recover into the *way of Truth all ſuch as have Erred and are Deceived*; that
1 Theſſ. 5. 21. thoſe who have hitherto been obſtinate, may *prove all things*; and that thoſe who can be perſwaded to conſider theſe things, may *hold faſt that which is good.*

Rom. 15. 5, 6. *And the God of Patience and Conſolation grant us to be like-minded one towards another, according to Chriſt Jeſus. That we may with one Mind and one Mouth Glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus.* Amen.

FINIS.